SERMONS

TO

COUNTRY CONGREGATIONS.

BY THE LATE

REV. GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

THE FOURTH EDITION.

G.R.
III.

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REV. GEORGE HAGGITT, A.M.

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SERMONS.

VOL. II.

SERMON I.

ON THE CATECHISM.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

IT is of the utmoſt importance to inſtil, into the minds of young perſons, right ſentiments of religion and morality; to teach them, at the firſt opening of the underſtanding, what they ought to believe, and what they ought to practiſe. If they are not inſtructed in this neceſſary know- SERM. I.

SERM. I. ledge in their youth, there is great reaſon to fear that the cares and pleaſures of the world will prevent their acquiring it at all; whereas right principles, properly inculcated at that early ſeaſon, will probably never deſert them during the remaining part of their lives.

With this expectation, our church has provided a catechiſm, which is a form of inſtruction by queſtion and anſwer; and ſhe enjoins her members to teach it their children, as ſoon as they ſhall be able to learn it: and ſhe further expects, that it ſhould not only be known, but thoroughly underſtood by them, before they take on themſelves, at their confirmation, thoſe engagements which were made for them by their ſureties at their baptiſm. This catechiſm contains, within a ſhort compaſs, the chief heads of Chriſtian faith and Chriſtian obedience; and, though there are ſome obſcure parts in it, yet, whatever is important is clear, and ſo plain that, with ſome little aſſiſtance from their elders, and

a proper degree of attention on their own parts, it may eaſily be comprehended by all, before they arrive at that age, when they will become themſelves anſwerable for the obſervance of their baptiſmal vow. It is to contribute my ſhare towards this good work, that I ſhall dedicate this and ſome future diſcourſes. SERM. I.

This catechiſm opens with a recital of the privileges which baptiſm confers, and of the promiſes which thoſe, who anſwer for the young perſon, make in his name. It then proceeds to inſtruct him in the articles of faith, which are contained in the belief, to which a ſhort explanation, of what may be gathered from it, is added. It goes on, to regulate his practice, by ſetting before him the ten commandments; after which he is told, that from theſe he may learn his duty towards God and towards his neighbour; and, in the anſwers to the two next queſtions, theſe duties are ſet forth more at large.

As it is impoſſible for us to do God's will without his ſpecial grace, which we

SERM. I. can only expect to be granted to our diligent petitions, the catechiſm next preſents us with the prayer which our Saviour himſelf taught to his diſciples, and with a commentary or paraphraſe upon it; and, laſtly, it concludes with a ſhort account of the two ſacraments, baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper.

I ſhall make ſome few remarks on each of theſe, paſſing over in ſilence, or in a very few words, thoſe parts which are obſcure and immaterial for you to know; what is important, as I hinted before, is neither difficult to be explained or underſtood.

The firſt queſtion, as to the name, ariſes from a cuſtom which prevailed among various nations, of giving to perſons new appellations, on their being adopted into new families; in like manner, we, on being made members of Chriſt's family, received a Chriſtian name, which denotes our relationſhip to him; this name, therefore, is very aptly aſked of us, when we are going to be queſtioned further as to the privileges which are conferred on us by baptiſm.

tiſm. Theſe are ſaid to be three:—we were made members of Chriſt, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; in other words, we are admitted into the ſociety of Chriſt's diſciples, we become one of that body of which he is the head, we gain a title to the mercy of God, and are put in a capacity of obtaining a bleſſed immortality after death. SERM. I.

Of the engagements which our god-fathers and god-mothers are ſaid to enter into for us, the firſt promiſes that we ſhould forſake all kinds of ſin whatever (the world, the fleſh, and the devil, being a phraſe to that import) the ſecond, that we ſhould believe all the articles of the Chriſtian faith; and the third, that we ſhould obey God's holy will; which we may in a great meaſure, though not, perhaps, entirely learn from the commandments.—Now there is certainly nothing improper in our ſponſors making theſe vows for us, and we are indiſputably bound to obſerve them; and, for the ſame plain reaſon, they are ſo

SERM. I. greatly for our own good; for, by the tranſgreſſion or neglect of them, we ſhall draw on ourſelves God's indignation, and be everlaſtingly puniſhed in the life to come.

I am now to conſider the apoſtles creed, as it is called, all the articles of which my god-fathers and god-mothers promiſed I ſhould believe. The firſt article requires my aſſent to this truth—that there is an Almighty God, the Father, and maker of heaven and earth; this is evident from the exiſtence of myſelf and every thing around me, from the order and regularity with which the univerſe is conducted, and from the common conſent and univerſal agreement of all mankind. Who makes the ſun to riſe and to ſet, the moon and the planets to perform their ſtated rounds, the ſeaſons to return at regular periods, the grain, which is buried in the earth, uniformly to revive and to grow up, but ſome almighty ſuperintending cauſe—which is God? We are next called on to believe in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by

by the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin Mary, ſuffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. Of the truth of all this, we have the cleareſt teſtimony:— about eighteen hundred years ago, a great perſonage, called Jeſus Chriſt, was born of a pure virgin, among the Jews; he declared that he was ſent from God, and that he was God's only Son: and he confirmed the truth of thoſe declarations by the wiſdom of his inſtructions, and by the many wonderful works which he performed. The Jews, through envy and malice, and fearing that the religion which he taught was to be erected on the ruin of theirs, falſely accuſed and crucified him, at the time Pontius Pilate was their governor, on the day which we now keep and call Good Friday; and, when they perceived that he was dead, he was taken from the croſs and buried in a new ſepulchre; a large ſtone was rolled at the mouth of it, and a guard of armed ſoldiers placed before it, leſt his diſciples ſhould come in the night and ſteal him away. SERM. I.

SERM. I. The creed next aſſerts that—"he deſcended into hell."—Whatever is meant by this, I think we may be certain that it is not the place of torment, which uſually goes by that name; it poſſibly means that place where the ſouls of the dead reſide during their ſeparation from the body, between the times of death and judgment; but this I do not think material for us to inquire into: what follows is, indeed, important—"that he aroſe again the third "day;" becauſe it is an earneſt that *we* alſo ſhall in like manner be raiſed from the grave, and live. That it was really himſelf, and not an apparition which deceived them, he clearly proved, by condeſcendingly permitting his diſciples to handle him, and by eating and drinking as he had done before his death; he remained on earth and ſhewed himſelf to large numbers during forty days. The ſtory of his body being ſtolen by his diſciples (which the Jews pretended) is too improbable to gain credit with any perſon of ſenſe and candour.

candour. He died then, and was buried on the Friday, and roſe again on the day which we now celebrate as Eaſter Sunday. "He aſcended into heaven:" this he did in the ſight of many of his followers, after having converſed with them, as I have juſt obſerved, during forty days, and given them a commiſſion to preach the goſpel to every creature. SERM. I.

He now ſits at the right hand of God, the place of higheſt honour in heaven, where he continually preſents our prayers, and makes interceſſion for us, and from whence he ſhall come in great pomp and majeſty, ſurrounded by myriads of angels, to recompenſe according to their deeds, both the multitudes which during all the ages of the world have died, and thoſe whom at his coming he ſhall find alive. The creed next calls on us to "believe in "the Holy Ghoſt," who is the third perſon in the bleſſed Trinity, by whoſe inſpiration the prophets ſpake, and the apoſtles did miracles; who is the author of all the good

SERM. I. good thoughts which ariſe in our minds, who ſanctifies and makes holy all righteous perſons.

But let me caution you againſt imagining that this divine being will take up his abode with you, without any efforts on your parts: you may indeed be ſure, if you earneſtly pray for his aſſiſtance, and ſincerely endeavour to deſerve it, that it will not be withheld from you; but then your own labours muſt be as ſtrenuouſly exerted, as if all depended (as in fact it does) on yourſelves. We next declare our belief, "in the holy catholic church, "and the communion of ſaints;" it is not perhaps very clear, now, what is preciſely meant by theſe, but probably they may be beſt explained together in this manner,—we believe that the true church of Chriſt is made up of all ſincere Chriſtians, of what nation or ſect ſoever, and that all ſuch are and ſhall be partakers of the benefits and privileges of the goſpel.

The

The next article in the belief, to which we are called on to give our aſſent, is, "the forgiveneſs of ſins." Before Jeſus Chriſt came into the world, men had certainly ſome hope of their offences being pardoned, which aroſe probably from the general goodneſs of God, from his delay of puniſhment, and from the tendency in human nature to expect what we greatly wiſh; but this hope by no means amounted to that full aſſurance of pardon, which was neceſſary to make the conſiderate in any degree eaſy under the ſenſe of their ſins, and to inſpire them with ardour in the work of their reformation. Jeſus Chriſt at length came preaching repentance and remiſſion of ſins; which I underſtand to mean, that if at any time of a man's life he is ſincerely ſorry that he has offended God, moſt heartily prays to be forgiven, and reſolves ſteadily to be guilty no more, but to be religious and virtuous in future; and if he adheres to his reſolutions, notwithſtanding all his former tranſgreſſions, he

SERM. I.

SERM. I. he will meet not only with mercy but with favour. This is a grand privilege; but let no one be tempted to abuſe it; let no one ſin in expectation, and, as he thinks, with intention, of amendment; of all difficult things to break through, bad habits are the moſt difficult. On account of his preſumption, likewiſe, God may hereafter refuſe him aſſiſtance, and then all his own endeavours will avail nothing; beſides, no one can be certain that he ſhall live another day, and if he dies in his ſins, he knows the conſequence; let us not, therefore, truſt to futurity, but do what we know to be ſo neceſſary immediately. Great is the ſalvation which is offered us; how ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect it!

Now follows our profeſſion that we believe in "the reſurrection of the body."—Of the truth of this the ſcriptures expreſsly inform us; at the laſt day our bodies will be raiſed from the grave, at the ſound of the trump of the archangel, they will be united again with our ſouls,

and

and we ſhall live. If you aſk me how it is poſſible that the fleſh, part of which has been eaten by worms, part blown about in duſt by the four winds, that of ſome men conſumed by fire, and of others buried in the ocean; if you aſk me how it is poſſible that all theſe ſcattered fragments and particles can be collected and joined together,—I aſk you, in return, whether it be not as eaſy for God to do this, as it was for him to form man from the duſt at his firſt creation? To revive a dead man appears to require no greater exertion of power than originally to have made him. You may form ſome idea of the poſſibility of our being revived again, by what you experience every year:—"That which "thou ſoweſt is not quickened, except it "die;" the grain you place in the earth firſt rots, and is afterwards enlivened, and ariſes, clothed with a beautiful verdure. And if God ſo clothe the graſs of the field, how much more ſhall he clothe your mortal bodies with a glorious immortality!—

SERM. I.

It

SERM. I. It ſeems probable that men will be firſt revived in the ſame bodies in which they died, but that an inſtant change will take place:—"This corruptible will put on in-"corruption, and this mortal will put on "immortality:"—Chriſt gave a ſpecimen of the nature of the change our bodies are to undergo, to Peter, James, and John, when he was transfigured on the mount; he appeared all glorious, his face ſhone like the ſun, and his raiment became white as ſnow. Such a change will take place with reſpect to the righteous at the reſurrection; for St. Paul tells us, that "Chriſt "will change our vile body, that it may "be faſhioned like unto his glorious body." You will obſerve, that when this glorious change in the bodies of men at the reſurrection is ſpoken of, it can only be meant of the bodies of the virtuous, although it be mentioned in general terms,—St. Paul being deſirous of taking for granted, that all thoſe to whom he writes would be in that number. The bodies of the wicked will

will certainly be raiſed at the ſame time, SERM. I.
but whether they will undergo any change, is uncertain; but it ſeems probable, that as many of the crimes of the wicked have ariſen from their bodies, that they ſhall, together with their ſouls, ſhare in the eternity of puniſhment which has been denounced.

The laſt article in the creed is our profeſſion of belief in "the life everlaſting." —Life is often put in ſcripture for happineſs, and it is poſſible may mean ſo here. I believe, that if I am pious and virtuous in this world, I ſhall be for ever happy in the next; or probably it may have a more extenſive ſignification, that of exiſtence, and may mean, not only the everlaſting bliſs of the righteous, but the everlaſting miſery of the wicked: in either caſe our belief is ſupported by ſcripture, which aſſures us, in various places, that as the religious and good man ſhall be eternally happy in the preſence of God, ſo the profane and immoral man ſhall for the ſame endleſs

SERM. I. endleſs time, undergo the moſt terrible diſgrace and torment. Such are the great truths to which we are called on to give our aſſent; it is, however, to little purpoſe that we obey the call, unleſs we join to a ſound faith, a good life and converſation: what this chiefly conſiſts in we may learn from the commandments, to which I ſhould now paſs; but this I muſt defer to future opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON II.

ON THE CATECHISM.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

SERM. II.

IN the former part of the xixth chapter of Exodus, are related the orders which the children of Iſrael received to attend the Lord upon Mount Sinai, and the ſolemn preparations which they were directed to make for that awful meeting. After that the hiſtorian proceeds in this manner:— "And it came to paſs on the third day "(the day appointed for God's deſcent) in "the morning, that there were thunders

SERM. II. " and lightnings, and thick clouds upon " the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet " exceeding loud, ſo that all the people " that was in the camp trembled. And " Moſes brought forth the people out of the " camp to meet with God, and they ſtood " at the bottom of the Mount. And Mount " Sinai was altogether in a ſmoke, becauſe " the Lord deſcended upon it in fire, and " the ſmoke thereof aſcended as the ſmoke " of a furnace; and the whole Mount " quaked greatly. And when the voice of " the trumpet ſounded long, and waxed " louder and louder, Moſes ſpake, and " God anſwered him by a voice."—Moſes then receives orders to charge the people not to preſume to aſcend the Mount: and after that, God delivered the ten commandments, as we find them in the xxth chapter. You obſerve that this delivery was originally made to the people of Iſrael, and undoubtedly the ten commandments were chiefly intended for their uſe. " I am the Lord " thy God (ſays the Almighty) which

" have

" have brought thee out of the land of SERM.
" Egypt, out of the houſe of ſlavery." This II.
is applicable to them only, and relates to their miraculous eſcape from the oppreſſion of Pharaoh.—But when we conſider the prodigious ſolemnity with which theſe ten commandments were uttered by God's own mouth, and that they were afterwards written with his own finger; and when we reflect, beſides, on their intrinſic excellency, that they contain in them the great heads of duty both towards God and man; and when we obſerve the veneration which Chriſtians of all ages have paid to them, we cannot but perceive that they are deſerving of all our attention, reſpect, and obedience.

The firſt commandment is directed againſt thoſe numerous objects of worſhip, to which the nations, who lived in and round about the country which the Jews were going to inhabit, paid their ignorant and wicked adorations; — the ſun, the moon, the ſtars, ſtocks, ſtones, animals, and deceaſed men, they either joined with the Supreme Being,

SERM. II. or worſhipped inſtead of him. To keep the people of Iſrael from this abſurdity and wickedneſs, God ſays to them, "Thou ſhalt "have none other gods but me."—I allow neither of ſubſtitute nor partner, to me only ſhall you offer up your prayers, praiſes, and adorations. We Chriſtians are, I hope, in no danger of offending againſt this law, in the ſame manner as the nations above-mentioned, but we may break it in other inſtances, and incur no ſmall portion of guilt for ſo doing. We may, and alas! too many of us do, give a preference to the pleaſures, honours, riches of this world, above God: now when we do this they are to us in the place of gods; it is them which we love with all our hearts, with all our mind, with all our ſoul, and with all our ſtrength; it is them which we worſhip; it is in them that we truſt, and, too often, it is them which we truly ſerve all the days of our life. Now, when this is the caſe, we certainly violate the firſt commandment: thoſe who dedicate their whole time, and

ſet their whole affections either on worldly honours or pleaſures, are (as the apoſtle expreſsly tells us, with reſpect to the covetous) Idolaters. "Thou ſhalt have none "other gods but me." The precept is delivered in negative terms, but it has a poſitive meaning; we are *not* only required by it *not* to worſhip what is *not* God, but we are required heartily to worſhip what *is* God. SERM. II.

As Proteſtants we are, I truſt, in little danger of infringing the prohibition contained in the ſecond commandment; but there is one ſect of Chriſtians, the Roman Catholics, who appear to infringe it grievouſly; they certainly make to themſelves images, and bow down before them. Some parts, however, of this commandment deſerve our notice: God ſays—"I am a "jealous God;" i. e. 'I am very tender 'of my honour; I bear neither partner nor 'competitor in thoſe duties which properly 'belong to me.' This jealouſy does not only imply a ſtrong diſlike, but a fierce

SERM. II. diſpleaſure, againſt the breakers of this law: what reaſon, then, is there to guard againſt it? "Who can ſtand in God's ſight when "he is angry?" Who can ſupport the effects of his diſpleaſure?

The concluſion of this commandment is remarkable; God repreſents himſelf as "viſiting the ſins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him, and ſhewing mercy unto thouſands in them that love him and keep his commandments." Men have uſually a great affection for their poſterity, and a great anxiety about them, and therefore, the more to deter them from groſs ſins, God affirms here that he will not confine his rewards and puniſhments to the good man or ſinner himſelf, but extend them likewiſe to his deſcendants. This ſeems particular, perhaps, and almoſt unaccountable, but yet in fact it is what is conſtantly happening. Do we not every day ſee children, and even children's children, enjoying the rewards of their anceſtors' prudence and virtues, or ſuffer-

ſuffering grievouſly in conſequence of their ancеſtors' crimes? This, indeed, is the courſe of nature; but remember, that the courſe of nature is under the direction of God. Obſerve, however, the difference between God's proceeding in the way of ſeverity and in the way of favour! He only threatens to viſit the iniquities of diſobedient parents on the third and fourth generation of their children, but ſheweth mercy unto a thouſand deſcents of the poſterity of them who love and obey him. SERM. II.

The third commandment forbids us to take God's name in vain; that is, never to mention it but on ſerious occaſions:—"The "Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that "taketh his name in vain;"—a ſtrong expreſſion, which implies, that he will look on him as exceedingly guilty. This commandment certainly extends to all kinds of ſwearing and curſing whatever. And here I muſt expreſs my wonder that there are ſo many men, who incur ſuch great portions of guilt on ſuch ſlight temptations!

SERM. II. When the robber tells you he was induced to take away his neighbour's goods, to furniſh himſelf with the neceſſaries or luxuries of life,—when the drunkard alleges, in excuſe for his failing, the delight which he finds in intemperance and jollity,—though their wickedneſs is great, we are able to form an idea of the motive which incites them to it; but what can we aſſign as a motive to the common ſwearer? He cannot hope to make himſelf richer by ſwearing, nor wiſer, nor more eſteemed; it will gratify none of his appetites or paſſions: there is no wit in it, nor is there any invention; for the moſt ſtupid may arrive at the ſame degree of perfection in it as the moſt ingenious. It is ſhocking to every pious ear, and diſguſting to every liberal mind: and though they who practiſe it are guilty of dreadful wickedneſs, I know no one end that it can poſſibly anſwer to them. The pretence that what they ſay is more attended to on this account, is too ridiculous to deſerve a ſerious reply; beſides,

ſides, if it were true, I beg you to reflect, whether ſuch attention would be worth purchaſing at the expence of your eternal ſalvation. SERM. II.

The fourth commandment enjoins the exact obſervance of the Sabbath; all kinds of labour were prohibited to the Jews on that day. We are not ſo ſtrictly bound, but that we may attend, as occaſion demands, to works of abſolute neceſſity: let us not, however, abuſe this Chriſtian liberty, by carrying it too far; let the hours of divine ſervice in particular be eſteemed ſacred; and let us, from charity and humanity, as well as reverence to God's laws, grant every reaſonable and poſſible remiſſion from their labours to thoſe who depend upon us. The poorer part of mankind, forced to inceſſant and uninterrupted toil, to procure themſelves the neceſſaries of life, have little time, during ſix days in the week, for the conſideration of religious ſubjects; and if they perform their morning and their evening ſacrifice of prayer and

SERM. II. and thankſgiving, it is all, perhaps, which they are able to do: but on Sunday, if they be not prevented by hard or inconſiderate maſters, they have opportunity as well as leiſure to think of another world; to aſſemble themſelves together with their brethren to worſhip their God, and to be inſtructed in their duty, and reminded of a day of judgment and a world to come.—Permit me to call on thoſe who have dependants under them, to do all in their power to render this excellent inſtitution of the Sabbath effective and uſeful: not only to free, as much as poſſible, from their uſual employments, thoſe who live under the ſame roof with them, but to make thoſe arrangements and ſettlements, with all who depend upon them, before the Lord's Day, which, when they are delayed till then, are gladly ſeized by the idle as an excuſe for not attending public worſhip; while they are ſincerely lamented by the well-diſpoſed, as the real cauſe of their abſence. The accounts of the poor are ſoon ſettled, the recom-

recompence of their labours for the week paſt is not long in adjuſting. Let it not then vexatiouſly be delayed; nor occupy with earthly cares thoſe hours which ought to be ſolely devoted God. Conſider the ineſtimable importance, to the poor, of Sunday well employed; conſider that the certain conſequence of their time being taken up, on that day, with earthly cares, muſt be total irreligion. Reflect how ſhocked you will be, and how heavy will be your account, if any of your dependants ſhould plead at the laſt audit—'But for my maſter's inconſideration 'I ſhould have been regular at church, 'ſhould have worſhipped my God, and 'have learnt and practiſed my duty!' Aſſembling on the Lord's Day, to ſerve the Almighty, together with his brethren, is no light part of a Chriſtian's duty, or which he is any degree at liberty to omit. Too many bad people, I confeſs, do come to church; but let it be remembered, at the ſame time, that none of the good ſtay away. SERM. II.

I ſhall

SERM. II. I ſhall in my next diſcourſe proceed to the commandments of the ſecond table, which contains the heads of our duty towards our neighbour.

SERMON

SERMON III.

ON THE CATECHISM.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

IN my explanation of the catechiſm I have already gone through with the commandments of the firſt table; I now proceed to conſider thoſe of the ſecond. Theſe open with the injunction to honour our father and mother; and ſurely, in the regulation of our conduct towards each other, no precept could with greater propriety take the lead: after that entire and boundleſs obedience due from all to God, the next degree of

SERM. III. of reſpect and reverence is due from children to their parents.

For this you have the divine expreſs command, with the promiſe of a reward annexed to it,—" Thy days ſhall be long in " the land which the Lord thy God giveth " thee." This indeed chiefly reſpected the Jews, and might either hold forth length of days as a reward to the dutiful, individually; or might promiſe the long poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan to the whole nation, if this precept were obſerved in general: but there is no reaſon to doubt but that Chriſtians alſo, who conſcientiouſly honour their parents, may reaſonably look for a temporal recompence to their obedience. In the firſt place, St. Paul, in writing to the Epheſians, ſetting before them this commandment, inſiſts on the promiſe annexed to it; and ſecondly, dutiful children are, according to the common courſe of things, likely to proſper and do well in the world. The whole of life is apt to take its colour from the employment of our youth,

youth, and that employment of it, which is moſt agreeable to our parents, is commonly the moſt to our own advantage—I need not mention motives of gratitude, they are too obvious; he, who is ill-behaved and cruel to the authors of his being, the foſterers of his childhood, to whom will he be kind? he who is negligent of this firſt and great duty, of what other can we expect that he will be mindful? SERM. III.

The ſixth commandment forbids murder. The atrociouſneſs of this crime is ſo great, and it is ſo certainly followed by the puniſhment of death from the laws of our country, that there is no neceſſity to dwell on it. The remonſtrances or warnings of the preacher can have little effect on him who can harbour in his breaſt any idea of it; let us, however, devoutly pray againſt, and carefully avoid, thoſe unruly paſſions, envy, hatred, and malice, and all kinds of uncharitableneſs, which are the uſual ſteps that lead to it.

Adultery

SERM. III. Adultery is prohibited by the ſeventh commandment. By many civilized nations this crime was puniſhed with death, and even by the divine law which was given to the Jews, and that to both the parties concerned in it, and ſurely very deſervedly; for there is no offence by which the order of ſociety is more diſturbed, none by which the peace of individuals is more cruelly wounded. On the ſide of the married perſon there is perjury added to impurity, and in every caſe there is the greateſt immorality and the baſeſt ſelfiſhneſs. What can ſhew a more total want of generoſity than, for a tranſient ſatisfaction to ourſelves, to deſtroy the peace of a fellow-creature — perhaps of a friend — for his whole life! The puniſhment among us is not now ſo great, at leaſt not by the law; but let us not be deceived; the guilt is ſtill the ſame, and the penalty is only delayed, to be exacted with greater ſeverity by the hand of God. I muſt juſt obſerve that this commandment has been judged to compriſe every

every deviation from chaſtity whatever; nor is the Chriſtian law, which threatens adultery, leſs ſevere againſt every other ſpecies of impurity—" Whoremongers and adul-" terers God will judge." SERM. III.

In the eighth commandment, the prohibition of all kinds of injuſtice, by which the property of another is invaded, is compriſed; not only he who robs me openly on the highway, or who breaks into my dwelling and bears off my goods, but he who, in any other leſs notorious and obſervable manner, defrauds me, is guilty of diſobeying this precept againſt ſtealing.—The great man, who avails himſelf of ſuperior power to deprive me of my right, and ſets me at defiance, becauſe I have not the means of applying to the law for protection; the worldly wiſe man, who takes advantage of ſuperior cunning to over-reach me in our bargains; and the tradeſman, who makes improper profits, either by adulterating the commodity in which he deals, by a deficiency in the weights and meaſures, or

SERM. III.

by any other manner of injuſtice, are all of them no leſs guilty of a breach of the eighth commandment, than the highwayman or the houſe-breaker.

When underſtood in this extenſive manner, which it certainly ought to be, it is to be feared that there are too many who would be ſhocked at the name of ſtealing, who are too intimate with the offence.

As the ſixth commandment aims to guard our life, and the eighth our property, the ninth is intended for the preſervation of our characters — "Thou ſhalt not bear falſe "witneſs againſt thy neighbour."—The moſt heinous violation of this precept is that of thoſe infamous perſons who, in a court of juſtice, and with the ſolemnity of an oath, aſſert what they know to be untrue, againſt an innocent man, and bring perhaps his life, perhaps his property, but certainly his good name, into danger. This is a crime of ſo deep a dye, that I truſt there is no need to warn any of my preſent audience againſt it: the commandment is, however,

too

too often tranſgreſſed, even in the beſt regulated ſocieties, in leſs eminent degrees;— and ſuch tranſgreſſions are the ſource of very much of the unhappineſs of ſocial life. SERM. III.

Next to his guilt, who ſwears publicly to my prejudice what he knows to be falſe, is that of him who affirms the ſame falſity in private, with a deſign to traduce my reputation. It is ſomething, that the forms of juſtice are wanting—it is ſomething, that Almighty God is not immediately affronted by ſolemn appeal;—but, in every other reſpect, the injury to the party defamed is often as great, and the ſtroke as wounding, as that which is given by the hand of the executioner. There are many other ways of infringing this commandment, where the degree of criminality, though ſtill inferior, is yet great; as when we ſpeak ill of others on ſuſpicion only—on ſlight grounds—or on vague report—or when we do it unneceſſarily—or take a pleaſure in it—or do not ſpeak in their defence, when we hear them unjuſtly or maliciouſly attacked. It is, beſides,

SERM. III.

ſides, ungenerous and unjuſt—ungenerous, to ſport with the characters of our fellow-creatures, on which their reception in the world, and ſometimes their bread, depends—unjuſt, becauſe it is not doing unto them as we would wiſh them to do unto us.

The laws of the laſt table conclude with "Thou ſhalt not covet."—The actual invaſion of the property of another, having been already prohibited,—the mere deſire to poſſeſs it, is now forbidden; and we ſhould ſet ourſelves aſſiduouſly to obey it, whether we conſider our own happineſs, our duty towards our neighbour, or towards God.

For, firſt, the contrary temper to what is here enjoined, makes a man miſerable; as, if he once gives free ſcope to his deſires, he is never likely to be ſatisfied; ſucceſs will but add fuel to the flame—the more objects of his wiſhes he gains, the more ardent he will ſtill be in purſuing others—and content will be, for ever, a ſtranger to his breaſt.

Secondly, it is an unjuſt temper, probably in itſelf, ſince we are not far from hating the man

man, whom we envy, and for whoſe poſſeſ- SERM.
ſions we greatly long—and almoſt certainly III.
in its effects, for he will not, when a convenient opportunity offers, long ſcrupulouſly reſtrain his hands from the property of another, in the hope of poſſeſſing which he permits his heart to riot uncontroled.

Laſtly, it is an irreligious temper, ſince it implies a diſcontent with God's diſpenſations towards us; and, as it uſually engroſſes the whole heart and affections, it baniſhes all thoughts of piety and another world.

Such are the celebrated laws of the two tables—laws which, I have before obſerved, were ſpoken by God's mouth, and written with his finger—you perceive how excellent they are in themſelves, and how proper for man to obey.—Let us, then, devoutly offer up our prayers, that they may all be deeply engraven on the fleſhly tablet of our hearts!

SERMON IV.

ON THE CATECHISM.

LUKE xi. 1.

One of his diſciples ſaid unto him, Lord, teach us to pray.

IN my laſt diſcourſe on the catechiſm, I concluded my explanation of the ten commandments. From theſe we are informed that we learn our duty towards God, and our duty towards our neighbour; and, in the anſwers to the two following queſtions, theſe duties are ſet down at large: but I have already, in my remarks on the commandments, anticipated the chief of what

SERM. IV.

what I could ſay on them; and as to thoſe points on which I have not ſpoken, they are expreſſed, in the catechiſm itſelf, in ſo clear a manner, that there is no neceſſity for me to dwell on them.

To underſtand, and to obey the commandments, ſhould be the ſtudy and the endeavour of our whole lives; but our own exertions will not do alone; if God does not grant his aſſiſtance to them, however ſtrenuous they may be, they will be vain:—to obtain, therefore, this aſſiſtance, it is our duty, at all times, to call for it by attentive and fervent prayer. I proceed, then, to take into conſideration that moſt perfect form which was compoſed by our Lord, at the requeſt of his diſciples, and is called by his name—the Lord's Prayer. Of all the general forms of addreſs to the Supreme Being, which are extant, it is undoubtedly at the ſame time the moſt rational and the moſt devout; ſo that (as it has been well ſaid*) whether we

* Ogden.

have

have an eye to the preaching or the praying of our Redeemer, the obſervation is equally juſt—" That never man ſpake like this man." SERM. IV.

The Lord's Prayer contains ſix diſtinct petitions, beſides the addreſs at the beginning, and what is called the doxology, at the concluſion. The addreſs is conciſe, but replete with meaning—" Our Father, " which art in heaven." It is obſervable, that we are not directed to ſay my Father, but our Father, which ſeems deſigned to remind us, firſt, of the vaſt authority and dominion of God, extending over all mankind—and, ſecondly, of the relationſhip which we bear to each other, he being the common parent of us all—and, conſequently, of the obligation under which we lie, to cultivate and entertain an univerſal affection and good will.

The application of Father, of which we are permitted to make uſe, reminds us of our being allied to him in many reſpects—by nature, for he created us, and that after his

SERM. IV. his own image—by providence, for he conſtantly preſerves and protects us—by grace, for he renews us again, according to his image, after that, by Adam's fall and our own manifold iniquities, we have defaced and deſtroyed the reſemblance—every way he is our Creator and Father. There is ſomething, likewiſe, attractive and winning in the title—God, or Lord, imply ſuch perfection, and ſuch ſuper-eminent authority, that, conſcious as we muſt be of our meanneſs and unworthineſs, we might be diſcouraged in our approaches to him; but the name of Father ſupports and emboldens. What earthly parent is there who does not love and deſire all manner of good for his offspring? "And "if men, being evil, do give good gifts "unto their children, how much more "will our Father, who is in heaven, give "good things to them that aſk him?"—"Which art in heaven." God is ſubſtantially preſent every where alike; but he does not every where equally diſcover himſelf,

ſelf, nor does he diſplay every where, with equal ſplendor, the beams of his glorious majeſty. The ſcripture frequently mentions a place of his ſpecial reſidence; here is his royal court, here is imperial throne, and here he is attended upon by ſaints and angels. This place is called heaven, and ſometimes the higheſt heavens, and by his preſence here God is deſcribed, both to diſtinguiſh him from other earthly parents, and to increaſe our reverence towards him, when we bring to mind his ſuper-eminent glory and majeſty. SERM. IV.

The firſt petition is "Hallowed or ſanc-"tified be thy name." God's name means himſelf, and when we pray that it may be hallowed or ſanctified, we mean to aſk that all mankind may make a diſtinction, obſerve a diſtance between God and other things, and that they may give to him the moſt decided and unrivalled preference: we mean to requeſt of the Almighty to this effect—'Mayeſt thou every where be 'had in the higheſt veneration! May all honour,

SERM. IV.

'honour, praiſe, and ſervice, be rendered 'unto thee by men, and by us, who are 'now addreſſing thee, in particular!'

"Thy kingdom come," is the ſecond petition. This would be more juſtly and intelligibly tranſlated, if it were—'Thy 'reign come.' The profeſſion of pure Chriſtianity is in the ſcriptures conſtantly called the reign of God. The petition here uſed ſeems more immediately to reſpect the ſtate of things at the time when Chriſt taught this prayer to his diſciples: they were inſtructed here to deſire, that the goſpel might be ſpeedily and effectually extended all over the earth; then in figurative language would commence the reign of God!

There is but too much reaſon, however, for us at this day to continue the petition, when we recollect that a very large part of the world is not yet converted to Chriſtianity, and that, even of thoſe who do call themſelves Chriſtians, too many are ſuch only in name, and that men in general are far,

far, very far diſtant from the purity which the goſpel enjoins. The complete reign of God implies, that the whole globe ſhould be Chriſtians, and ſuch Chriſtians as our Maſter commands. This is a ſtate of things which poſſibly may never entirely arrive; but we ought to pray, and may hope that we are continually making nearer approaches to it. Such prayers, I am ſure, are our duty, and I think there are grounds for ſuch hopes. SERM. IV.

" Thy will be done on earth as it is in " heaven," is the third petition. Every decree of the Almighty is unqueſtionably received with the utmoſt complacency and the moſt entire ſatisfaction, by thoſe pious and loyal ſpirits who ſurround his throne, and they are certainly ever prompt and eager to ſhew the moſt perfect obedience to his commands: ſuch complacency and ſatisfaction in all events, and ſuch obedience to all the divine commands, we in this petition deſire may be exhibited by mankind. May we as fully acquieſce in all thou doeſt, and as

SERM. IV. as exactly obey all thou enjoineſt, as the bleſſed angels!

The fourth petition is—"Give us this "day our daily bread." This is well paraphraſed in the catechiſm itſelf:—"I pray "unto God that he will ſend us all things "that be needful both for our ſouls and "bodies." Two explanations are given of this petition; it probably comprizes both; either the bread of the time to come, that is, the happineſs of futurity, or our maintenance in this preſent life. The firſt reſpects our ſouls, and the latter our bodies. Obſerve the modeſty of the petition as relating to earthly things, and be careful in all your other prayers to conform to it. It aſks not for riches, elegancy, ſplendour, but for bread; and though under the term bread is, doubtleſs, comprehended all neceſſaries, yet they are clearly neceſſaries alone, not ſuperfluities. Nor do we aſk even for neceſſaries, to make us ſo far beforehand that we ſhould be independent of God; but, we ſay, "Give us this day our

" daily bread;" ' grant us what may ſuf- SERM.
' fice for our preſent ſupport; for the reſt IV.
' we truſt cheerfully to thy providence; we
' caſt all our care upon thee, in full know-
' ledge and confidence that thou careſt for
' us.'

" Forgive us our treſpaſſes as we for-
" give them that treſpaſs againſt us," is the fifth petition. The firſt ſtep towards obtaining forgiveneſs of our ſins, is to be ſenſible of them, and to confeſs them. " If " we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive " ourſelves, and the truth is not in us; but " if we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and " juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe " us from all unrighteouſneſs." Now this petition implies confeſſion, in as much as by the very aſking of forgiveneſs of ſins, we own that we have been ſinners: we, however, annex a condition, on which we apply for this forgiveneſs, which is, that we ourſelves pardon thoſe who have in any way offended againſt us. Let us then be very careful, when we approach the throne of mercy,

SERM. IV. mercy, to bear no malice or hatred in our hearts, to wiſh no ill to any of our fellow-creatures, however they may have provoked us; but to be ready on any opportunity to do them all ſervice. "If you forgive to "men their treſpaſſes (ſays our Saviour) "your heavenly Father will alſo forgive "you." The reverſe is likewiſe true.

"Lead us not into temptation, but de-"liver us from evil," is the laſt petition; for I think, though it conſiſts of two clauſes, it may be conſidered as one petition. I have ſeen theſe words changed for others, which are in my opinion more agreeable to the ſenſe of the original language. "Abandon us not to temptation, but pre-"ſerve us from evil." The phraſe, "lead "us not into temptation," ſeems to imply, that we believe God to be the author of it, which he certainly never is of the ſort of temptation here intended: whereas, 'abandon 'us not, nor permit us to go into tempta-'tion,' ſteers clear of this ſeeming impropriety. The word, which is tranſlated *de-*

liver,

liver, means more than that—it means *pre-* SERM.
ſerve, by which may be underſtood, not IV.
merely 'free us from the evils into which 'we have fallen, but prevent us from fall-'ing into any evils at all.' Temptation is of two kinds; one is ſent to give the virtuous an opportunity of diſplaying their good qualities: ſuch was that of Abraham, when he was commanded to offer up his ſon; ſuch were thoſe into which the early Chriſtians fell, when they were ſo ſeverely perſecuted; and ſuch are thoſe which good men now experience, when they meet with vexations and afflictions, and paſs victoriouſly through them. The other ſort of temptations are thoſe occaſions of ſin, which but too often occur, that are by their own violence, and the weakneſs of thoſe to whoſe lot they fall, inſurmountable. It is obvious that they are theſe latter againſt which we pray, as theſe only are prejudicial to us, the former tending to the glory of God and the good of our own ſouls. "Preſerve us from evil:"—

SERM. IV. that greateſt of all evils, Sin, and the conſequences of ſin, the anger of God, are here principally intended: but yet, in an inferior degree, it is certainly allowable to have in our eye a preſervation from temporal evils; but this muſt be accompanied with the filial ſubmiſſion of our bleſſed Saviour to the diſpoſal of the Almighty—"Nevertheleſs, not my will but thine be "done."

The concluding clauſe of the Lord's Prayer is called the Doxology, the meaning of which is, a form of aſcribing glory to God:—"For thine is the kingdom, the "power and the glory, for ever and ever. "Amen." 'Thou haſt a perpetual and 'immoveable authority, by which at all 'times thou directeſt and governeſt all 'things, wherefore we profeſs to rely on 'thee alone, and have a full confidence in 'thee in all our wants; thine is the glory; 'all honour and reverence, all love and 'thankfulneſs, are due unto thee, as in the begin-

'beginning, ſo at this preſent time, and 'will be to all eternity.' SERM. IV.

Having thus gone through with each article of the Lord's Prayer ſeparately, I ſhall conclude with taking a more connected view of it, by preſenting you with it in a ſhort paraphraſe.

O thou, the great creator and preſerver of me and all the reſt of the univerſe, who art enthroned in majeſty above all height, and dwelleſt in light which no eye can approach; mayeſt thou be honoured by all thy innumerable creatures, as thy unſpeakable greatneſs requires! may their minds be impreſſed with juſt ſentiments of thy wiſdom, goodneſs, and omnipotence!

"Thy kingdom come." Oh! haſten the period when the religion which thou haſt graciouſly revealed to us by thine only begotten Son, may be profeſſed all over the world in its original purity, and may obtain ſuch an influence over the hearts and lives of all its votaries, that thy will may be ſubmitted to and per-

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formed on earth as it is in heaven! that we, as far as the weakneſs of humanity will allow, may as exactly be guided by thy good pleaſure as the bleſſed angels!

"Give us this day our daily bread." During our paſſage through this tranſitory ſtate, do thou, who gave us life, give us the means of ſupporting it; we pray not for ſuperfluities to conſume on our own luſts, nor do we too anxiouſly look forward into futurity; we will be ſatisfied with a moderate preſent proviſion, nor have we the fooliſh deſire to be independent of thee.

"Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we for-"give them that treſpaſs againſt us." Remember that we are but duſt, and, on our ſorrow and amendment, pardon us all in which we have offended; be not extreme to mark what we have done amiſs. And as thou haſt juſtly made it a condition of obtaining mercy from thee, that we ſhew mercy to our brethren, afford us thy aſſiſtance to conquer any imperfections in our temper; ſubdue in us all tendency towards malice

malice and reſentment; and grant that our benevolence may be univerſal, and without exception! SERM. IV.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver "us from evil." Permit us not to fall a ſacrifice to the ſnares of the world, the allurements of the fleſh, or the artifices of the devil: let us not be tempted above what we are able to bear: in every age, in every ſtation, in every change of circumſtances, ſurround us with the ſhield of thy all-powerful protection! In proſperity, and in diſtreſs, in health, and in ſickneſs, let thy holy ſpirit guard us from the approach of ſpiritual evil; and when we arrive at the cloſing ſcene of our earthly pilgrimage, ſtill be thou near to aid and ſupport us; ſuffer us not at our laſt hour, for any pains of death, to fall from thee; nor let thy care of us conclude with this mortal life, but in the day of judgment alſo, of thy great mercy, good Lord, deliver us! Save us from the bitter pains of eternal death, and receive us into the happy manſions of ſaints and angels. Theſe petitions

SERM. IV. we humbly offer to the throne of thy grace, in full confidence both of thy mercy and omnipotence: thou who ſpake and it was done, commanded and it was made faſt, all that we can aſk or want, thou canſt abundantly confer on us; for boundleſs and uncontrolable is thy power and dominion, and to thy glory and kingdom there is no end!

SERMON

SERMON V.

ON THE CATECHISM.

ST. JOHN xiii. 35.

By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples.

I AM now arrived at my concluding diſcourſe on the catechiſm; it will be taken up with explaining the two ſacraments; thoſe peculiar rites of the Chriſtian religion, ordained by Chriſt himſelf, as the diſtinguiſhing marks by which his diſciples were to be known. In doing this, I ſhall obſerve the method of the catechiſm itſelf, and, firſt, explain the nature and meaning of a ſacrament in general; 2dly, I ſhall conſider

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SERM. V. the ſacrament of baptiſm; and 3dly, that of the Lord's ſupper.

" How many ſacraments hath Chriſt or-
" dained in his church?" In the anſwer to this firſt queſtion, we are are told that there are " two ſacraments only, as generally ne-
" ceſſary to ſalvation." The number is mentioned, becauſe in the church of Rome they obſerve ſeveral others, for which we Proteſtants affirm there is no foundation in the Scriptures. The word 'generally' is inſerted from a charitable motive; it means, that though, for the moſt part, the obſervance of theſe ſacraments can only inſure to us ſalvation, yet in caſes, where from ignorance or want of opportunity, they have been neglected, that God may paſs over and pardon the omiſſion.

We are next told, that the meaning of the word ſacrament is, " an outward and vi-
" ſible ſign of an inward and ſpiritual grace,
" given unto us, ordained by Chriſt him-
" ſelf, as a means whereby we receive the
" ſame, and a pledge to aſſure us thereof."

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That is, a ſacrament is made up of an outward part and an inward part, ſomething which is viſible to us, and ſomething which is inviſible; the former is ſome action in which we partake, which is a ſign, token, or repreſentation of the latter: this latter is ſome grace or favour from heaven; and the outward action in which we partake, is a means of acquiring this grace or favour, and a pledge to aſſure us that we ſhall acquire it. Now conſider this explanation of a ſacrament in general, with reſpect to the ſacraments of baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper. In baptiſm, water is the outward ſign; the purification of our hearts, the inward grace; do you perceive the reſemblance? as your bodies are made clean by water, ſo baptiſm, by which you are made Chriſtians, cleanſes and purifies your minds. It was alſo ordained by Chriſt himſelf; you remember his command to his apoſtles, juſt before his aſcenſion into heaven:—"Go ye "into the world, and preach the goſpel to "every creature, baptizing them in the "name

SERM. V. "name of the Father, and of the Son, and "of the Holy Ghoſt." In all covenants, you know, there are conditions made by each party; the Goſpel is a gracious covenant between God and man: on our part, the conditions are faith and obedience; on God's part, forgiveneſs of ſins, and eternal life. Now by the ſacrament of baptiſm, we become entitled to theſe benefits, and it is a ſeal or pledge of God's, that if we obſerve the conditions promiſed by ourſelves, or our ſureties, he will not fail to beſtow them on us.

Let us now try the above explanation of a ſacrament, with reſpect to the Lord's Supper. Here the outward viſible ſign is bread and wine; the inward ſpiritual grace, the ſtrengthening and refreſhing of our ſouls. As bread and wine nouriſh and ſupport the body, ſo the celebration of the ſufferings and death of Chriſt does, or ought to, excite in us a quick ſenſe of gratitude for what he has done for us; to animate us to a cloſer attachment to Him; to create in us a

ſtronger

ſtronger abhorrence of ſin, and affection for virtue; and by this means to nouriſh and ſupport our ſouls. It was likewiſe ordained by Chriſt himſelf: this done immediately before his death, in the preſence of all the apoſtles; he himſelf partook of it with them, and left it as his dying requeſt and command, that they ſhould continue to ob-obſerve this rite in remembrance of him. It is likewiſe a means whereby we appropriate to ourſelves the benefits of our Redeemer's death: he has thought fit to appoint ſuch means, and, I confeſs, I do not ſee how any Chriſtian can reaſonably expect, whilſt he neglects them, to attain the glorious end. As to its being a pledge to aſſure us of God's mercy, conſider what it repreſents;—the body of Chriſt, which was broken, and the blood of Chriſt, which was poured out, to make atonement for our iniquities; to procure for us the pardon of our ſins. What may we not expect when we are calling to mind ſuch an amazing inſtance of good-will to men, as this? May we not be

SERM. V. be certain, that he who withheld not from us his only Son, will, with him, beſtow on us all manner of good gifts? Thus, you ſee, baptiſm and the Lord's ſupper exactly anſwer to the deſcription of a ſacrament; they both contain outward and viſible ſigns; water in the one; bread and wine in the other: theſe ſigns alſo repreſent inward ſpiritual graces; water repreſents purification from ſin; and bread and wine, an increaſe and ſtability in virtue: they were likewiſe ordained by Chriſt, and are means of obtaining, and pledges that we ſhall obtain, certain graces and benefits.

We will now conſider what farther is ſaid in the catechiſm, with reſpect to each of them.

Of thoſe who are baptized, we are told, there is required, "Repentance, whereby "they forſake ſin; and faith, whereby they "ſtedfaſtly believe the promiſes of God "made to them in that ſacrament." The primitive church was extremely ſtrict in this particular. Before Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed,

bliſhed, when perſons grown to manhood offered themſelves to baptiſm, no one was admitted till he could give proof of his ſorrow for his paſt evil life, and till he could offer reaſons for his faith in Chriſt; and it was afterwards expected, that he ſhould ſhew his ſincerity by his future virtuous and pious behaviour. But if this were the cuſtom, and if faith and repentance are really neceſſary, it is a very natural queſtion which follows, "Why then are infants baptized, "when by reaſon of their tender age they "can give proof of neither?" The anſwer is ſatisfactory; their godfathers and godmothers promiſe both for them, and when they come to years of diſcretion, they themſelves are bound to perform them; and for this plain reaſon, becauſe the engagements, which have been made in their names, are ſo greatly for their good. And we accordingly find, that the cuſtom univerſally prevails of taking on ourſelves, at our confirmation, thoſe vows which were made by our ſureties at our baptiſm. SERM. V.

It

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It now remains that I conſider the Lord's ſupper. There is a difficulty in the catechiſm, with reſpect to this, which ſhould not be paſſed over: we are told that the body and blood of Chriſt are "verily and "indeed taken, and received by the faithful." This expreſſion ſounds like the doctrine of the Papiſts; that the words which are ſaid over the bread and wine by the prieſt, convert them into the real body and blood of Chriſt! but this certainly is not the ſentiment of our church; by being verily and indeed taken, we may, and ought to underſtand only, that the benefits of our Redeemer's death are truly received by the faithful believer and worthy communicant alone. Of theſe benefits I have already ſpoken, and indeed they are ſo plainly expreſſed in the catechiſm, that it is unneceſſary to dwell on them; the 'ſtrengthening and refreſhing of our ſouls by the body 'and blood of Chriſt, as our bodies are by 'the bread and wine.' The ſubject is cloſed with a deſcription of the requiſites for the worthy

worthy partaking of this ſacrament, which are ſaid to be, "Examination of ourſelves, "whether we truly repent of our former "ſins; a ſtedfaſt purpoſe to lead a new "life; a lively faith in God's mercy through "Chriſt; a thankful remembrance of his "death; and a charitable, benevolent diſ-"poſition towards all men." SERM. V.

Now theſe are but the ordinary duties of a Chriſtian; and though perhaps no man performs them in the perfect manner in which he ought, yet, without aiming at the performance of them, he is equally unfit for any other religious duty, as he is for receiving the ſacrament; and if he reſolves not to try to make himſelf more fit, he might as well caſt off all religion whatever. The ſubject is of the utmoſt importance; I muſt be excuſed if, in dwelling on it a little, I repeat frequently the ſame arguments *. Unhappy errors

* Arguments and perſuaſions to frequent communion were enforced by the author from the pulpit, in many ſermons: theſe, in his life-time, he took occaſion to

SERM. V. errors prevail to too great a degree with reſpect to this ceremony, to the very great prejudice of religion, and danger even of many well-diſpoſed perſons. Mankind were in a fallen ſtate, overwhelmed with ignorance and wickedneſs, when Jeſus Chriſt came down from heaven to teach and to ſave them. His whole life was paſſed in the former of theſe employments, and he willingly encountered a moſt painful and ignominious death to compaſs the latter. It was juſt before he died, that he appointed to be obſerved, in perpetual remembrance of him, this participation of bread and wine: 'This bread (ſays he) repreſents my body; 'this wine repreſents my blood; when you 'eat and drink them, think of what I have 'undergone for you, and of the great ad-

to throw together in a ſmall pamphlet, which he publiſhed under the title of "A Familiar Treatiſe on the "Sacrament."—And it is for this reaſon that the 'repeated arguments,' to which alluſion is made above, are not reprinted in this work, as the writer himſelf had given them to the world in another form.

'vantages

'vantages which you have gained by it:' "Do this in remembrance of me." Now there is nothing myſterious in this; nothing more than what all may underſtand: you are required to do a plain act, to ſhew your gratitude for the greateſt inſtance of benevolence that ever was: do you, or do you not, believe that Chriſt died for us, and left us this command? If you do not, there's an end of the matter; but if you do, how can you ſtand excuſed in your own eyes for refuſing to comply with his ſo earneſt requeſt? You will not tell me it is too much trouble! what! to paſs one hour in celebrating the goodneſs of that friend and Saviour, who ſpent all the hours of his life, and, laſtly, ſacrificed his life itſelf, in your ſervice!

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Beſides, it is my duty to tell you that there is much reaſon to fear, that to thoſe who wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt what they ought to do in this particular, and abſent themſelves altogether from the Lord's table, all which he has done and ſuffered will have been in vain.

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But you are afraid, perhaps, you will ſay; the threats of St. Paul, which are again repeated in the communion ſervice, terrify and alarm you; you cannot flatter yourſelves that you ſhall be worthy partakers of the Lord's ſupper; and you therefore think it ſafer wholly to abſtain from it! You are then reſolved ſtill to continue in your ſins; you are determined not to examine yourſelves and repent; not to have hope in Chriſt, nor to be in charity with your brethren;—for unleſs this be the caſe, if you have but a deſire to turn to God, and a wiſh to be in charity with your neighbour, with a firm purpoſe to endeavour both, you may with the greateſt ſafety draw near unto the Lord's table. The threats of St. Paul are principally directed againſt thoſe to whom he writes, the Corinthians, on account of ſome irregularities, of which they had been guilty in celebrating this ſacrament: as we celebrate it in a different manner, the ſame irregularities are not now practicable; therefore the apoſtle's threats ſcarce ſeem applicable to the Chriſtians

tians of theſe days; and even to the Corinthians, the puniſhment denounced is not ſo great as we may ſuppoſe it. There is one word, which has been too ſtrongly tranſlated in our Teſtament; in the original, the ſenſe of the word evidently is not "damnation," but "condemnation." "For he who eateth "and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drink-"eth condemnation to himſelf;"—and the word does not mean eternal, but temporal, condemnation; does not mean puniſhment in the next, but correction in order to amendment in this world: the very next verſe explains it,—"For this cauſe many among "you are weak, and ſickly, and ſome ſleep." Now this certainly can only relate to puniſhment in this life. SERM. V.

Not that I would be underſtood, that you ſhould approach the altar with no preparation whatever, with no purpoſes at all of repentance and amendment; indeed, I think that is ſcarcely poſſible, but I would not have you think every little defect a ſufficient reaſon to keep you away; I would perſuade

SERM. V. you to do what you can; and it may be, nay it will be, if you perſevere, that you will acquire new grace and ſtrength; you will grow in holineſs and virtue; what you now look upon with terror, will become your delight; and finally, having finiſhed your earthly courſe, you ſhall, from partaking of the table of your Lord here on earth, be advanced to the enjoyment of his bleſſed ſociety, in the manſions of his Father.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

ON BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION.

Acts xix.

PART OF THE 5TH AND 6TH VERSES.

They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jeſus; and when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghoſt came on them.

I PROPOSE, in this diſcourſe, to treat of two of the ceremonies of our church—baptiſm and confirmation:—they are cloſely connected together, the one being only a completion of the other. Something perhaps, I may advance, which may be deſerving of the attention of you all; but I

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more particularly requeſt thoſe to liſten to me, who are ſhortly to be brought before the biſhop.

I ſhall begin by explaining to you, in the plaineſt words I can fix upon, how baptiſm came to be neceſſary; what the nature of it is; and what are the advantages which we derive from it.

When our firſt parent, Adam, was created, he was (as you muſt remember) forbidden to eat of the fruit of a certain tree which grew in the midſt of the garden where he was placed; he was told, at the ſame time, that if he did eat of it, he ſhould ſurely die. By *death* is meant, in this place, extinction of being; it is the ſame as if God had ſaid—'In the day that thou tranſgreſſeſt my command, thou ſhalt loſe that life which I have juſt conferred on thee!' I mention this, becauſe *death*, in the ſcriptures, ſometimes means, at leaſt is underſtood to mean, eternal puniſhment after death; but that, in my opinion, is not its meaning here. Well, nowith-

notwithſtanding God's goodneſs to him, SERM. VI.
Adam, tempted by the devil, having a bad example ſet him by his wife, and being ſeduced by his own paſſions, fell from his obedience; he ate of the tree whereof it had been commanded him—'Thou ſhalt not eat.' Was the ſentence, then, executed upon him immediately?—not immediately; but it was pronounced;—and the reſpite, which was granted him, can only be conſidered of the ſame nature as that which paſſes between the condemnation and execution of a criminal. Several puniſhments, however, and pernicious effects of his crime, he inſtantly experienced; he was turned, with diſgrace, out of that beautiful garden in which he had been placed; the ground was curſed for his ſake, and he was condemned to procure his food from it with labour and ſorrow; he became mortal, and therefore ſubject to all the ill health, all the diſeaſes, common to mortality;—the firſt ſteps in vice being made, his heart was in a degree corrupted, and he became more

SERM. VI. liable to vice in future; and I think it probable (for ſuch is the uſual conſequence of guilt) that the powers of his underſtanding were conſiderably impaired. At length, the time arrived when he was to ſuffer his entire puniſhment; he died—he laid down that exiſtence, which, had he preſerved his innocence, would have been immortal;—he ceaſed to be; and, according to ſtrict juſtice, he never would have revived—there would have been an entire end of him. Now all mankind, being ſprung from this Adam, ſhare in the ill conſequences of his diſobedience; they become liable to all the bad effects of his crime—and, among the reſt, to death! Every one of us, like unto our firſt parent, after we have run our ſhort race here on earth, ſink into the grave—moulder in the duſt from which we originally ſprung—and, but for God's boundleſs mercy, in that ſtate ſhould we continue for ever.

I will now tell you of the remedy which God has provided for this, which will bring me

me to the immediate ſubject on which I pro- SERM. VI.
miſed to treat.

" As in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt " ſhall all be made alive." As by the tranſgreſſion of Adam we loſt happineſs and immortality, by the perfect obedience of Chriſt, even to the death upon the croſs, we regain them; or, what ought to be the ſame thing, we are put in a condition of regaining them, and cannot fail of them if it be not our own fault. As connected with Adam, we all ſink into the grave;—as connected with Chriſt, we ſhall all, at a certain time, be raiſed again. To obtain this high privilege, it is neceſſary that we take Chriſt to be our maſter—that we become his followers—that we are made one of that great body of which he is the head. Now this is done by baptiſm;—baptiſm is the ceremony which was appointed by himſelf for our admiſſion into that ſociety which he came to eſtabliſh. The meaning of baptiſm is 'waſhing,' which may either be done, you know, by dipping the body

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body into water, or by ſprinkling water upon it—it is immaterial which. This is a proper and ſignificant repreſentation of what it is meant for,—namely, of that cleanſing from the guilt of our firſt parent which is brought about in us, by taking Chriſt for our maſter. As water removes all foulneſs from the body, ſo becoming the ſervants of Chriſt removes all the foulneſs of ſin (which had deprived us of the favour of God) from the ſoul.

We become by baptiſm, as the catechiſm expreſſes it, members of Chriſt, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. "Members of Chriſt," i. e. we become united to him in a ſimilar manner as the members of the body are to the head. "Children of God," i. e. we are again reſtored to God's favour, he looks on us again as his ſons; our likeneſs to him, which had been much impaired by the fall of Adam, is reſtored. "Inheritors of the kingdom of "heaven," that is, we gain a title of being happy for ever both in body and ſoul: this had

had been loſt by Adam's tranſgreſſion, both for himſelf and his poſterity, had it not been for Chriſt; when we had died there would have been an entire end of us; through his means, if it be not our own fault, we ſhall not only riſe again and be immortal, but our immortality ſhall be accompanied likewiſe by infinite happineſs. You will obſerve that I put in the clauſe, 'if it be not 'our own fault;' for there are certain conditions on our part to be performed after baptiſm, without which we ſhall not be entitled to the privileges of it; nay, if we neglect theſe conditions, there is reaſon to believe that we ſhall be in a far worſe ſtate than if Chriſt had never come. Chriſt has procured immortality for all mankind, that is, eternal exiſtence; but whether this eternal exiſtence ſhall be happy or miſerable, depends on themſelves; by their own miſconduct they may turn what was meant as the greateſt of bleſſings into the greateſt of curſes. SERM. VI.

After

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After the catechiſm has recited the privileges to which baptiſm gives us a claim, it proceeds to ſet forth the conditions on which we may ſecure them; and thoſe conditions our god-fathers and god-mothers promiſe in our name that we ſhall obſerve. There are three; firſt, that we ſhould renounce what God forbids; ſecondly, that we ſhould believe what he teaches; thirdly, that we ſhould do what he commands. Our god-fathers and god-mothers promiſe, firſt, that we ſhould renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the ſinful luſts of the fleſh. We have reaſon from ſcripture to believe that there is an evil ſpirit called the devil, who being at enmity with God does all he can to counteract his gracious deſigns, and who is permitted to a certain degree to tempt to wickedneſs the ſons of men. With this evil ſpirit, our ſureties engage that we ſhall have no concerns; that we ſhall avoid or reſiſt him. They engage,

engage, alſo, that we ſhall renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; that is, that we ſhall not be ſeduced by the attractive appearance of outward objects to ſeek to obtain any unlawful power, diſhoneſt profit, or forbidden pleaſure. They engage, alſo, that we ſhall renounce all the ſinful luſts of the fleſh: the apoſtle St. Paul will tell you what this means—"Now the "works of the fleſh are manifeſt, adulteries, "fornication, uncleanneſs, hatred, variance, "wrath, ſtrife, ſeditions, envyings, and ſuch "like:"—we promiſe to renounce then whatever God forbids, every ſin of every kind, and having done this, a way is opened for the performance of the other two promiſes made in our name; for to abhor and fly from what is wrong, are the firſt ſteps towards doing what is right. It was engaged for us then, ſecondly, that we ſhould believe all the articles of the Chriſtian faith. Theſe are to be found at large in the ſcriptures; in the ſcriptures is contained every thing which God teaches, the chief heads, however, are thrown

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thrown together in what is called the Apoſtle's Creed. The authority on which our belief is claimed, is ſo great, and the proofs, on which the objects of it are founded, are ſo ſtrong, that, to thoſe who examine into the matter, there is no room for heſitation.

It was engaged for us, laſtly, by our god-fathers and god-mothers, that we ſhould keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the ſame all the days of our life.

To theſe ſcriptures alſo, we muſt have recourſe, to know what this will and theſe commandments are; and, when we know them, we ſhall find them ſo reaſonable in themſelves—ſo calculated to make us happy here—and ſo certain to conduct us to heaven, when we die—that we ſhall be convinced that we are deeply intereſted to obey them. On the whole, then, the things promiſed for us are greatly for our own good, and tend, if we keep them, to make us happy both here and hereafter. Hence, if we are rational beings, we become bound

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to perform them; and as, hitherto, we have engaged to do ſo only by others, we become bound, likewiſe, when we come to years of diſcretion, to engage for ourſelves. And ſurely it is adviſeable that this be done in a public manner, in the face of the world—that we may give a ſignal proof, to our friends and neighbours, that we are deſirous to regulate our lives by the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. SERM. VI.

Now an opportunity is given you of doing this at the confirmations, which are held from time to time for that purpoſe; there you may openly profeſs, before one of the heads of the church, and before all thoſe amongſt whom you live, that you approve of the engagements entered into in your name, by your god-fathers and god-mothers; — that you 'confirm' and take them upon yourſelves;—and that you will endeavour, as much as you poſſibly can, to maintain them. If, when you are at a proper age, you neglect this, you forfeit all the privileges which are procured by

SERM. VI. by baptiſm—ſince you plainly ſhow that, if you had had a choice, you would not have been baptized;—otherwiſe you would gladly embrace the opportunity of 'confirming' it. Chriſt taught the abſolute neceſſity of baptiſm, and ordered his apoſtles to go into the world, baptizing every one whom they converted to Chriſtianity. No doubt then can exiſt, whether we ought to be baptized or no;—and if ſo, no doubt can exiſt, whether we ought to be confirmed:—our baptiſm was, on our parts, involuntary—it was performed by others; by confirmation alone, can we make it our own.

The firſt part of confirmation, then, is taking on ourſelves, the promiſe made in our name, by our ſureties, at our baptiſm; the ſecond part is the having the biſhop lay his hands on our heads, and pray over us that we may receive God's aſſiſtance in our endeavours to keep them: in other words, that we may increaſe continually in the gifts of God's holy ſpirit. You remember that the ſcripture informs you that the apoſtles uſed to lay their

their hands on the heads of thoſe who had been baptized, and by that means communicated to them what are called the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; the moſt conſpicuous of theſe gifts were miraculous; the perſons, over whom the apoſtles thus prayed, were enabled to do various things above the power of human beings: we are not to ſuppoſe that this was the caſe with all; but the remainder of them received, what was ſtill more valuable, ſuch a portion of heavenly grace, that their ignorance was removed, their hearts purified, and they were put in a way, if they were not wanting to themſelves, of attaining the kingdom of God. The ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, that is, the heads of the different churches, have, I believe, in all ages, continued this practice of praying over the baptized, that theſe laſt mentioned gifts of the Holy Spirit may deſcend upon them. The miraculous gifts are now no more, becauſe Chriſtianity can propagate itſelf without them—which was the purpoſe for which

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they were intended; but the common gifts, though inferior in outward ſhow, are, as I obſerved before, ſuperior in real value. Theſe gifts, we have reaſon to hope, will be conferred upon us at our confirmation, provided that we take upon ourſelves the promiſes made at our baptiſm, with that firm reſolution of keeping them, which we ought to do. In order, then, to prepare yourſelves properly for confirmation, you ought to endeavour to make yourſelves maſters of the meaning of thoſe promiſes which you then take upon yourſelves, and of thoſe privileges which you then attain; and you ought, likewiſe, to offer up your conſtant and ardent prayers to the Almighty —that he would ſo improve your underſtanding that you may perceive, in its full weight, the infinite importance of acting up to your profeſſions; and that he would ſo purify your hearts that, in ſpite of all temptations to the contrary, your behaviour may be regulated accordingly:—which, may God,

God, of his infinite mercy, grant!—to whom, with the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour, obedience, and thankſgiving, now and for ever. SERM. VI.

SERMON VII.

ON THE LITURGY.

FIRST PART.

1 CORINTHIANS xiv. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the underſtanding alſo.

WHEN we aſſemble together to offer up our prayers and thankſgivings to the Almighty, we ſhould be careful that it be not with our lips only, but with our hearts alſo, that we approach him; and, to this end, it is requiſite that we comprehend thoroughly the words which we make uſe of; we may pray with our mouth, without perceiving the meaning of what we are ſaying; but

SERM. VII. if we would pray with our heart, we muſt pray with the underſtanding alſo. The compoſers of the Form of Prayer, which we uſe in our churches, have, under this conviction, and with this view, adapted our Liturgy to all capacities, and in general it is plain and intelligible; but as there are particular parts of it, which may ſeem to ſome rather obſcure, and as there are others, which perhaps are not ſufficiently attended to, I ſhall in this, and ſome ſubſequent diſcourſes, enter at large into an explanation of it; and in doing this, I ſhall endeavour to free it from ſome objections which have been made to it,

It is uſual for every perſon, at his entrance into the houſe of the Lord, to offer up to him ſome ſhort preparatory addreſs in private; this is both decent and prudent; the ſubject of it ſhould be always to beg, that we may perform our following devotions with attention, and that they may be accepted by our heavenly Father; the words which we may chooſe to make uſe of

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are not material, but perhaps none are better than theſe:—" Let the words of my mouth, " and the meditation of my heart, be ac- " ceptable in thy ſight, O Lord, my ſtrength " and my redeemer!" SERM. VII.

But if it be neceſſary that all parts of our devotion ſhould be performed with reverence and attention, it is more particularly neceſſary that this ſhould be ſo, for ſurely it would be the height of abſurdity to be then negligent and inattentive, when we are offering up our petitions againſt it: if we make this preparatory addreſs only an empty form, which it is to be feared too many do, what is it but a ſolemn mockery of the Almighty!

The ſervice opens with ſeveral detached ſentences from ſcripture, one or more of which the miniſter is directed to read: the purport of ſome of them is, to recommend confeſſion of ſins and repentance, and of others, to aſſure us, that if this confeſſion and this repentance are ſincere, we ſhall ſave our ſouls alive. Now theſe

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are, with peculiar propriety, placed at the opening of our ſervice; for, guilty creatures as we all are, confeſſion of our guilt ought certainly to precede our ſupplications; we ought ſurely not to preſume to aſk for bleſſings, before we have, with unfeigned ſorrow, acknowledged our tranſgreſſions, and aſked forgiveneſs of them. The efficacy of repentance is alſo expediently ſet before us at the beginning of our devotions, ſince, if we believe every ſin to be irreparable, it would anſwer no purpoſe to confeſs or to beg forgiveneſs; all hope would be precluded, and, conſequently, all endeavour to obtain God's favour would be diſcouraged. After the recital of one, or more, of theſe ſentences, there follows an exhortation, or piece of advice, from the miniſter to the congregation, grounded upon them. It begins with the addreſs of "Dearly beloved brethren," which denotes the zeal that the miniſter has, or ought to have, for the ſpiritual welfare of his flock, and the deference and attention which

which they, in their turn, ought to pay to what proceeds from him. "The ſcripture "moveth us in ſundry places, to acknow- "ledge and confeſs our manifold ſins and "wickedneſs, and that we ſhould not diſ- "ſemble nor cloke them before the face "of Almighty God, our heavenly father, "but confeſs them with an humble, lowly, "penitent, and obedient heart." The meaning of this is evident; we are certainly commanded, in various places of the holy writings, to own our miſdoings; not to think that we ſhall be able to conceal them from the Almighty God; and this we ought to do with an humble, mortified, and repentant ſenſe of them, "to the end "(as the exhortation ſets forth) that we "may obtain forgiveneſs of the ſame, by "his infinite goodneſs and mercy." We confeſs our ſins in order to obtain remiſſion of them. "If we confeſs our ſins "(ſays St. John) God is faithful and juſt "to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us "from all unrighteouſneſs." But although we

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SERM. VII. we ought at all times to make this acknowledgement, we ought to do it, moſt chiefly, when we are met together to give thanks for the favours we have received; to celebrate the praiſes of our maker; to hear his holy word read to us; and to aſk whatever is neceſſary both for our bodies and ſouls: this being the caſe, the congregation are beſought to accompany the miniſter, with humble voices and ſincere hearts, in the following general confeſſion:—"Almighty and moſt merciful Father, we "have erred and ſtrayed from thy ways "like loſt ſheep:" this is in imitation of the following paſſage in ſcripture; "All "we, like ſheep, have gone aſtray, we "have turned every one to his own way;" that is, like ſheep who have deſerted their ſhepherd, we have wandered from the paths of the Lord; "we have followed too "much the devices and deſires of our own "hearts;" we have given ourſelves too much up to the innate corruption of our nature, a corruption which we were born with,

with, and derived from our firſt anceſtor, but which, by the grace of God, we might, if we had endeavoured it, have ſurmounted. SERM. VII.

" We have left undone what we ought to " have done; and we have done what we " ought not to have done." Numberleſs acts of piety and benevolence, which it was our duty to have performed, we have neglected; numberleſs crimes, ſins, and follies, which we ought to have avoided, we have committed; " and there is no health in " us;" we are ſpiritually ſick and indiſpoſed, and there is no ſalutary principle remaining in us, by which we can, of ourſelves, turn unto God: but, notwithſtanding this, now that we have thus, according to thy will, confeſſed our infirmities, do thou, O Lord, of thy great goodneſs, have mercy upon us; ſpare us, according to thy moſt gracious promiſes to them who confeſs their faults; ſpare us, good Lord, and grant, O moſt merciful Father, through the merits, and for the ſake of thy dear Son, that we may, for the time to come, lead a pious, juſt,

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juſt, and temperate life, ſuch as may conduce to our own ſalvation, and to the glory of thy holy name. At the concluſion, the people, beſides having joined in it audibly, ſhall ſay 'Amen,' which ſignifies, it is true; theſe are our real ſentiments, the word expreſſing their hearty concurrence with what has been ſaid, and their earneſt deſires that their petitions may be granted. After this confeſſion follows the abſolution, which is ſaid by the prieſt alone, and in this the people are not to join, but merely to be ſilently attentive; for on this occaſion the prieſt ſtands in the place of Chriſt's ambaſſador, and declares to the people the terms of God's reconciliation with them, on their faith in his word, and on their repentance and amendment. The objection to this part of our ſervice, as favouring of Popery, cannot with juſtice be maintained; for the abſolution of the Roman Catholic prieſts is given in private, and to each individual—whereas this is given in public, is conceived in general terms,

terms, and is perfectly agreeable to ſcripture, there being conditions annexed to it; the miniſter declares to the congregation God's forgiveneſs of their ſins, but he expreſsly limits it to thoſe who are penitent, to thoſe who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy goſpel. The abſolution concludes with an exhortation, that we ſhould beſeech God to grant us this true repentance, and, in order to it, the aſſiſtance of his holy ſpirit; that our preſent employment may be pleaſing to him, and the reſt of our life ſo pure and holy, that through the merits of Chriſt we may finally come to his eternal joy. SERM. VII.

Next follows the Lord's Prayer, which is repeated ſeveral times in the courſe of the ſervice; but having already explained it in my diſcourſes on the Catechiſm, I ſhall not dwell upon it at preſent. And now, after having all joined audibly in the Lord's Prayer, which has been preceded by confeſſion of ſins, and by hearing the mercy of God proclaimed on certain terms, we

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we go on to the Pſalms, or to celebrating the praiſes of the Almighty. But that the tranſition may be the more natural, the miniſter prays that the congregation and himſelf may be enabled by God to perform the office, to which they are proceeding, in a proper manner: "Lord, open thou "our lips;" and the people anſwer, "That "ſo they ſhall be able to ſhew forth his "praiſe." Theſe words are from the fifty-firſt Pſalm, which is one of thoſe in which David, oppreſſed by the ſenſe of his guilt, dares not preſume to ſing the praiſes of God, before he had prepared himſelf for it by humiliation and repentance. The two following ſentences are likewiſe taken from the Pſalms—"O God, make ſpeed "to ſave us;" "O Lord, make haſte to "help us;" and are aptly introduced on this occaſion; for as it is at all times reaſonable to pray to God to ſave us from ſin, and to help us in performing our duty; it is more particularly ſo, when we are about to perform ſo exalted an office as that of celebrating

celebrating God's praiſes. All are now ordered to ſtand up; we read, that when the Prieſts and Levites praiſed the Lord, all Iſrael ſtood: and we begin this good work by the ſum of all the praiſes which we can offer, comprehended in a few words, to which we frequently afterwards return: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, "and to the Holy Ghoſt," as it was paid them by the earlieſt of created beings, angels and archangels, and the whole hoſt of heaven; as it is now paid them by the ſame holy perſonages and beings, and by good and righteous men, and as it ſhall continue ſtill to be for ever and ever, world without end, to a length of time to which there ſhall be no period. SERM. VII.

And now the unſpeakably great ſubject, which we are to celebrate, being propoſed, the miniſter calls on the people for the immediate performance of it. "Praiſe ye "the Lord;" to which they are to anſwer with readineſs and chearfulneſs, ſignifying their joyful concurrence with the propoſal, "The

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" The Lord's name be praiſed." We now proceed to the Pſalms, which are divided into certain portions, and ſuch a number of them appointed to be read each day, ſo that they all come over every month. In our morning ſervice, however, the ninety-fifth Pſalm is commanded always to be read firſt, and with ſingular propriety, it being a diſtinct invitation to the ſeveral duties of praiſe, prayer, and hearing the word, with an awful warning of the danger of neglecting God, drawn from his judgments on the diſobedient Jews. " O come, let us ſing unto " the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the " ſtrength of our ſalvation;" O come, let us join together in praiſing our maker; let us rejoice and be glad that ſuch an all-powerful being is the guardian both of our preſent and future ſafety. " Let us come " before his preſence with thankſgivings; " let us ſhew ourſelves glad in him with " pſalms;" let us approach him with grateful thanks for his bleſſings; let us ſhew what joy we have in the contempla-

tion of him by rapturous hymns; "For "the Lord is a great God, he is king "above all gods;" he is unſpeakably ſuperior to all who have been called gods by the heathen, to all their deified princes and heroes, and, in compariſon with him, the higheſt orders of arch-angels are leſs than nothing. "In his hands are all the cor-"ners of the earth, and the ſtrength of "the hills is his alſo:" his influence, his preſence, extends to the moſt remote and inacceſſible places, and there is none where he cannot ſave or deſtroy. "The ſea is "his, and he made it, and his hands pre-"pared the dry land. O come then let us "worſhip and fall down before the univer-"ſal Father, for he is the Lord our God, "and we are the people of his paſture and "the ſheep of his hand,"—we depend on him for the ſupply both of our bodily and ſpiritual food, and, notwithſtanding his greatneſs, he graciouſly adminiſters to our wants, with as much tenderneſs as a ſhepherd to the wants of his flock. "To-day SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. " if ye will hear his voice, harden not your " hearts as in the provocation, and as in " the day of temptation in the wilderneſs;" —be not obſtinate and diſobedient as the children of Iſrael were, when they wandered forty years in the deſert, murmuring and repining, after having been ſo miraculouſly brought out of Egypt by Moſes; follow not their example, nor tempt and provoke God, as they did, but ſoften your hearts, be religious and virtuous immediately, to-day, whilſt it can be called to-day, leſt you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. Hear the tremendous words of God himſelf, with regard to that rebellious crew. " I ſware in my wrath that they " ſhould not enter into my reſt;" this was addreſſed to them in a temporal ſenſe, and relates to their excluſion from the promiſed land of Canaan; but be aſſured, that if ye imitate their wicked conduct, the threat will be fulfilled to you in a ſpiritual ſenſe, and you will be eternally ſhut out from the kingdom of heaven.

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After the repetition of the doxology, which is commanded to be again alſo repeated after every pſalm, we proceed to a certain portion of the Pſalms, which are appointed for the particular day of the month; but, as it will be neceſſary to ſay much on this ſubject, I ſhall reſerve the farther proſecution of it to another opportunity. SERM. VII.

SERMON VIII.

ON THE LITURGY.

SECOND PART.

1 CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the underſtanding alſo.

THE laſt time we met together, I mentioned my intention of employing ſome diſcourſes in explaining our church ſervice, and I proceeded in this explanation as far as the Pſalms. I obſerved that we begin our devotions by one or more detached ſentences from ſcripture being recited by the miniſter, in which confeſſion of ſin is recommended, and the efficacy of repentance ſet forth. I took notice of the propriety of

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this: for, guilty creatures as we all are, the owning our miſdeeds ought certainly to precede our petitions for favours and bleſſings; and the aſſurance of pardon on repentance is expediently ſet before us, to give that warmth, that faith to our ſupplications, which are eſſentially requiſite to render them acceptable.

After theſe ſentences follows an exhortation from the miniſter, grounded on them, with a call to the immediate performance of the duty of confeſſion of ſins.—After the confeſſion follows the abſolution, in which the miniſter declares God's pardon of the people's tranſgreſſions on certain terms,—on their ſorrow for what is paſt, and their amendment in future; this is followed by the prayer taught by our Saviour himſelf to his diſciples; after which, having firſt beſought the Almighty to open our lips, that we may be enabled properly to ſing his praiſes, we proceed to the Pſalms, to the celebration of the praiſes of the Lord. This duty, I obſerved, opens by the ſum of all which we

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can offer, compriſed in a ſhort compaſs:— "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the "Holy Ghoſt;" as it was ſung from the very beginning of the creation, ſo it ſtill is, and ſhall continue to be for ever and ever, to a duration to which there ſhall be no period. And now the unſpeakably great ſubject of our ſpiritual ſongs being propoſed, the miniſter invites the congregation to the immediate performance of this ſublime duty: "Praiſe ye the Lord;" to which they reply, with joyful concurrence in the propoſal, "The Lord's name be praiſed." SERM. VIII.

In the morning ſervice we are always directed to begin with the ninety-fifth Pſalm, which is a diſtinct invitation to the ſeveral duties of prayer, praiſe, humiliation, and thankſgiving; with a terrible inſtance of God's puniſhment of the rebellious Jews, for the hardneſs of heart which cauſed their neglect of them: "I ſware in my wrath "that they ſhould not enter into my reſt;" this threat was fulfilled with reſpect to them, in their excluſion from the promiſed

SERM. VIII. land of Canaan; but it will be fulfilled, with reſpect to us, in a higher ſenſe, if we follow their wicked example, by our being ſhut out from the kingdom of heaven. We next go on to read certain pſalms appointed for the particular day of the month. Here I broke off in my laſt diſcourſe, and it was at this place that I engaged to reſume the ſubject. The firſt and ſtrict meaning of a pſalm, is a ſong in praiſe of God; but in its more extended ſenſe, it ſignifies any ſong on a religious ſubject; the greater part of thoſe, which are called David's Pſalms, are, ſtrictly ſpeaking, pſalms, that is, they are ſpiritual ſongs, in which the wiſdom, goodneſs, power, or ſome other perfections of the Deity are celebrated; but yet there are many on other ſubjects, where the praiſes of God make only an incidental part; there are ſome which are called penitential pſalms, where the author confeſſes and laments ſome wickedneſs of which he has been guilty; others, which contain imprecations or wiſhes of evil to ſome enemy, either of the writer himſelf

himſelf or of God; there are ſome which pray for deliverance from affliction, ſome for pardon of ſin; while there are others which may be called prophetic pſalms, foretelling future events, particularly the coming of Chriſt, and the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom. Almoſt all of theſe we may, with great propriety uſe, and, in ſome manner or other, apply to ourſelves. We have all reaſon to join in God's praiſes—we have all of us ſins to confeſs and lament—we have all of us enemies, either ſpiritual or bodily, from whom we deſire deliverance—and we moſt of us, at one time or other, labour under afflictions from which we wiſh to be freed. The pſalms which contain imprecations or prophecies, ſeem to be exceptions; but, as to the firſt, we may obſerve that they are directed againſt God's enemies, the wicked, and ſeem not ſo much to be wiſhes as predictions of evil; as to the latter, when we read them, we may admire God's goodneſs in inſpiring holy men to foretel ſuch bleſſings to the human race,

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race, and we may rejoice in their accompliſhment. Theſe pſalms are called David's Pſalms, becauſe the greater part were compoſed by him; but there are many, which were written by others: it is not now well known by whom they were collected; probably by different perſons; and they were finally put into one book by Ezra, on the return from the Babyloniſh captivity;—and the ancient cuſtom of ſinging them in the temple and ſynagogue was reſtored by him:—this cuſtom is ſtill obſerved by the Jews; it was likewiſe, in the earlieſt times, adopted by the Chriſtians, and has continued to this day:—the ſinging them has indeed been changed for reading, not perhaps without ſome loſs of devotion; however, ſuch is the cuſtom at preſent. We muſt be careful, in reading theſe pſalms, to conſider who it is that ſpeaks, for the author does not always ſpeak in his own perſon; ſometimes the words are put into the mouth of God or Chriſt, ſometimes they are given to wicked men: but a moderate degree of attention

attention will enable us, in general, to diſ- SERM. tinguiſh this. The pſalms which we have VIII. in our Prayer-Book, are tranſlated from the ſame original as thoſe in the Bible; the words are ſomewhat different, but the ſenſe you will find to be, in general, the ſame: the tranſlation in the Prayer-Book was made in older times than that in the Bible; and, as the people were uſed to it, it was not thought adviſeable to change it, though perhaps that in the Bible is in ſome reſpects better.—I obſerved to you that theſe pſalms are divided into different portions, one of which is directed to be read every day, ſo that they will all come over every month; —however, on ſome particular faſts and feſtivals, particular pſalms, applicable to the occaſion, have been ſelected.

I ſhall diſmiſs this ſubject by obſerving, that the book of Pſalms is an inexhauſtible treaſure of every branch of piety, prayer, praiſe, humiliation, and thankſgiving;— and, therefore, a more conſtant uſe of it, than of other parts of the ſcripture, is very

SERM. VIII. very properly enjoined in our Form of Prayer.

As we began with confeſſion of ſins, and then proceeded to ſetting forth God's moſt worthy praiſe,—we now go on to hear his moſt holy word, the miniſter being directed to read ſelect portions from the Old and New Teſtament. It was always eſteemed a ſolemn part of divine worſhip among God's people, the Jews, to read in their aſſemblies his word; they were poſitively commanded to do it.—"When "all Iſrael is come to appear before the "Lord thy God, in the place which he "ſhall chooſe, thou ſhalt read this law be-"fore all Iſrael in their hearing."

It was a cuſtom with the Jews to read the 'Law' for the firſt leſſon, that is, the five books of Moſes, called the Pentateuch; and the prophets for the ſecond. We Chriſtians, who have the New Teſtament in addition to the Old, take our firſt leſſon from the law and prophets together, that is, from the whole Jewiſh ſcriptures, and

our

our ſecond leſſon from the New Teſtament, which contains four hiſtories of the life of our Saviour, written by four different perſons, and likewiſe the epiſtles or letters of ſome of his moſt eminent followers. SERM. VIII.

Where there is church every day in the week, the Old Teſtament, with ſome exceptions of repetitions and leſs uſeful or more difficult parts, is, the whole of it, read over once every year, and the New Teſtament three times. The books of both Teſments, are read in the ſame order in which they ſtand, except that, in the Old, the prophet Iſaiah (who foretels, in the fulleſt manner, the coming of Chriſt) is read immediately before Chriſtmas-day, the day of Chriſt's birth; and, in the New, the Goſpels are read in the morning, and the Epiſtles in the afternoon. I ſhould obſerve however that, excepting two or three chapters, the book of Revelations is never read in public, as it is very difficult to be underſtood, and fit only for the private ſtudy of thoſe who are qualified for it.

I muſt

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I muſt pauſe here, earneſtly to recommend to you, to be ſeriouſly attentive while the word of God is reading; it always ſpeaks on the moſt important ſubjects; and, though it may not be always eaſy to underſtand every part of it, yet the difficulty will leſſen by attention, and ſome good may always be drawn from particular parts, though now and then the portion appointed to be read may not, in general, be intelligible to the unlearned.—But let me hope that you will not content yourſelves with what is read to you of God's word in public, but employ yourſelves frequently, in either reading, or liſtening to others reading it, in private.—It uſed to be a cuſtom, in every family, to paſs much of the Sabbath in reading the Bible, and I truſt the ſame cuſtom remains in many, yet; no employment can be more profitable; it will give conſolation to the afflicted, and reproof to the iniquitous—it will give faith to the unbeliever, and increaſe the godlineſs of the ſober-minded: I entreat you, therefore, to make your-

yourſelves well acquainted with this moſt valuable of all books; it will prove your ſureſt protection from the aſſaults of the devil, and beſt preſervative from the practice of habitual wickedneſs. You may, occaſionally, fall into temptations, and even yield to them—but, if you are conſtant in reading the Bible, it will be almoſt impoſſible for you not to leave off ſinning preſumptuouſly. SERM. VIII.

Its precepts will ſo open your hearts to a ſenſe of what is right—its promiſes of everlaſting glory will ſo excite your hopes—its threatenings of everlaſting miſery will ſo alarm your fears—that you muſt be quite abandoned of God, and given over to a reprobate mind, if it does not arouſe you to piety and virtue.

I ſhould now proceed to a conſideration of the hymns which follow each of the leſſons, but this I muſt defer to a future opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

ON THE LITURGY.

THIRD PART.

1 CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the underſtanding alſo.

IN my laſt diſcourſe on this ſubject, I proceeded in my explanation of our church ſervice, as far as thoſe hymns which are repeated after each of the leſſons; and it was there that I engaged to reſume it. Theſe hymns or pſalms are, with much propriety, intermixed with hearing the word of God, each promoting the benefit which we receive from the other; thus, the hearing the word is apt to excite in us gratitude and

SERM. IX. thankfulneſs, which we ſhew forth in celebrating our Maker's praiſe, and this latter again will diſpoſe us to liſten with a greater degree of attention and delight to the word. There are two hymns which follow each leſſon, both in morning and afternoon, and it is left to the miniſter's choice which he will read; but as the cuſtom, in general, is to read the ſame particular one, I ſhall not dwell upon the others. Of the four which are uſed, the three latter are taken from Scripture; that which follows the firſt leſſon in the morning is not ſo, but it is recommended to us, both by the length of time which it has been uſed in the Chriſtian church, and by its own intrinſic excellence. It is called Te Deum, from the two firſt words of it in Latin, which was the language it was originally written in. "We "praiſe thee, O God, we acknowledge thee "to be the Lord;"—we confeſs that thou art the ſupreme ſovereign of the univerſe. "All the earth doth worſhip thee, the "Father everlaſting;"—there is no corner of

of the globe ſo barbarous, there has been no age ſo rude, but that devotions have been offered to thee, the common Father of all. But not only do the human race worſhip thee, the angels alſo, the heavens and all the powers that are therein, cherubim and ſeraphim (two different orders of celeſtial beings) celebrate without ceaſing thy praiſes, evermore crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord "God of ſabaoth, heaven and earth are "full of the majeſty of thy glory." This exclamation is copied from the ſixth chapter and the third verſe of Iſaiah, where the prophet repreſents the ſeraphims, whom he ſaw in a viſion, ſtanding before the throne of the Lord, continually crying to each other, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hoſts, "the whole earth is full of his glory." I ſhould obſerve to you here, that the word ſabaoth is the Hebrew word for hoſts, and that it does not mean the Sabbath day, as perhaps it is generally thought, for though the two words are alike in ſound, they are very different in ſenſe.

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The Almighty is frequently called by this name in the Scriptures, God of ſabaoth, or Lord of hoſts or armies; and it ſignifies the ſovereign of angels, archangels, and all the heavenly powers; of ſtars, planets, and all the various worlds which make up the univerſe; of good and virtuous men, whether before or ſince the times of Chriſtianity; all theſe make up the army of the Lord, of which he is general and commander. "The "glorious company of the apoſtles praiſe "thee; the goodly fellowſhip of the pro- "phets praiſe thee; the noble army of mar- "tyrs (thoſe who laid down their lives for "thy ſake) praiſe thee."

All theſe illuſtrious perſonages, as it was their employment and delight while on earth, in defiance of all dangers and ſufferings, to aſſert thy glory and to perform thy will, ſo is it (now that they are freed from their labours and ſorrows) their higheſt happineſs to hymn thy praiſes. Thy church, likewiſe, throughout all the world, is inceſſantly proclaiming and celebrating thee, the Father

of

of an infinite majeſty; and with thee, Jeſus Chriſt, thine honourable, true, and only Son; and the other, the third perſon in the ever bleſſed Trinity, the Holy Ghoſt, our comforter, inſtructor, and ſupporter. We then return again to the praiſes of our redeemer: "Thou art the king of glory, O "Chriſt; thou art the everlaſting ſon of "the Father:"—thou waſt the ſon of the Almighty from all eternity. "When thou "tookeſt upon thee to deliver man"—when thou undertookeſt to come down upon earth, to free the human race from ſin and the puniſhment due to it, "thou didſt not ab-"hor the Vigin's womb;"—thou didſt not diſdain to be born of the Virgin Mary. When thou hadſt overcome the ſharpneſs of death, by willingly thyſelf ſubmitting to it, thou tookeſt from it its chief ſting, by opening widely the kingdom of heaven to all true believers. Thou art now exalted to the right hand of God, where thou ſitteſt partaker of the father's glory, whence, we are convinced, that thou wilt deſcend, at SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. the laſt day, to be our judge. On which account, we pray thee, aſſiſt thy ſervants in their paſſage through this ſinful world, thoſe ſervants to whom thou haſt ſhewn ſo much love, as to redeem them with thy moſt precious blood: take them into the number of thoſe ſaints, who ſit with thee in everlaſting glory. "O Lord, ſave thy "people, and bleſs thine heritage;"—bleſs thoſe whom the father hath given thee, whom indeed thyſelf purchaſed with thy life. "Govern them and lift them up for "ever,"—and evermore ſupport them. "Day by day we magnify thee;"—we pay all honour to thy perfections, and let us take care that we may with truth affirm this. And we perpetually pay our devotions to thy holy name; vouchſafe therefore, condeſcend this day, to watch over us and keep us free from ſin. "O Lord, have "mercy upon us, have mercy upon us; O "Lord, let thy mercy lighten, or fall, upon "us, as our whole truſt and confidence is "in thee. O Lord, in thee have I truſted,

"let

" let me never be confounded, and ſubdued " by my ſpiritual enemies." SERM. IX.

The ſecond leſſon being ended, we recite the hundredth Pſalm, which ſeems to come with peculiar propriety, after liſtening to a portion from the goſpels. It particularly relates to the goſpel times, as appears from its inviting all lands, or nations, to rejoice in the Lord, and to come before his preſence with ſongs, as it declares that we are all equally his people, and the ſheep of his paſture. Now follows the Apoſtle's Creed, called by the name of the Apoſtles, not from any well-grounded pretenſions which it has to have been drawn up by them, but from its containing a brief enumeration of the important doctrines which they delivered. It is called Creed, from the firſt word of it in Latin, Credo, ſignifying 'I believe.'

As I explained each ſeparate article of it in my diſcourſes on the Catechiſm, I ſhall not at preſent dwell upon it, but merely obſerve, that the reaſon of our being ordered to repeat it is, that we may fix the more

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deeply in our minds the truths which are neceſſary to be believed, in order to our eternal happineſs, and that we may bear open teſtimony of our agreeing together in the unity of the faith. After this ſolemn profeſſion, the miniſter and the people betake themſelves to prayer,—firſt, mutually interceding with God for each other, that they may be enabled to offer him an acceptable ſacrifice; ſuch is the meaning of "The Lord be with you," and the reply of the congregation, "And with thy ſpirit."

Having thus mutually prepared each other for the following ſervice, which conſiſts wholly of petitions, they begin them with ſhort ſentences:—"Lord have mercy upon "us; Chriſt have mercy upon us;" to which is ſubjoined the Lord's Prayer. If there are any, who take offence at this prayer being repeated ſo often, let them remember that it was Jeſus Chriſt himſelf who was the author of it; and though we are cautioned againſt uſing vain repetitions in our prayers, yet, all repetitions cannot be vain,

vain, ſince our Saviour is deſcribed, in the twenty-ſixth chapter of St. Matthew, begging God to remove the cup from him three times, and in the very ſame words. The miniſter now ſtands up, and he, together with the people, offers up in ſhort terms the heads of what they afterwards, in the following prayers, aſk for more at length; this may be perceived by any one, who will compare them together; the ſhort ſentences are ſo plain as to require no explanation. The collects are then directed to follow; they are called collects, either from their having collected in them much good matter, or from their being repeated when the people are collected, or aſſembled together: and the firſt of theſe collects is that for the day. There are collects appointed for the celebration of the principal parts of Chriſt's Hiſtory; for inſtance, a collect for his birth, for his death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion; there are likewiſe collects to bring to our minds, and to pray that we may imitate, the holy lives and deaths

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. deaths of his chief followers. But, beſides theſe, there are collects likewiſe appointed for each Sunday and week in the year; and the intention I ſuppoſe was, that we might at different times pray for different Chriſtian endowments, and ſo obtain all which is needful for us. Theſe are the whole of the variable collects, the others are fixed. Of the two, which immediately follow in the morning, the firſt is for peace, which is a comprehenſive word in this place for all temporal bleſſings, and the ſecond for grace, which is meant to compriſe all ſpiritual bleſſings. After theſe two collects, on Sundays, Wedneſdays, and Fridays, the Litany is directed to follow; but, as this was originally meant for a diſtinct office, I ſhall take another opportunity of explaining it, and proceed now with the other parts of the ſervice. Having put up the above-mentioned prayers for ourſelves, we now begin our interceſſions for others; and firſt, according to the apoſtle's injunctions, for the king as ſupreme. In this prayer, I know not that there

there is any difficulty; the word 'repleniſh' means to fill; and the word 'wealth' means proſperity;—"Grant him in health and "wealth long to live,"—grant him to live long in health and proſperity. The prayer for the royal family is very properly ſubjoined from the intereſt which the people have in them; both as in their turns they may one or more of them be called to the throne, and as the conduct of perſons, in ſuch a conſpicuous ſituation, is likely deeply to affect the national manners. Our temporal ſuperiors being thus prayed for, we next put up our petitions for our ſpiritual guides, and for all congregations committed to their charge, for biſhops and curates, that is, for biſhops and all the inferior clergy, and all people under their ſuperintendance. We next pray, during the ſitting of parliament, for God's bleſſing on its conſultations, which is peculiarly proper, the happineſs of the nation entirely depending, under God, on the wiſdom of its meaſures. And now having gone threugh

SERM. IX. through our prayers for particular perſons, we ſubjoin one for all mankind in general, and more eſpecially for the members of the Chriſtian Church, that they may profeſs the ſame faith, that they may live in peace with each other, and may lead religious and virtuous lives. In the ſame prayer, likewiſe, we interceed for the ſick, and thoſe who are any otherwiſe afflicted or diſtreſſed, and, at his deſire, for any particular individual who may be in ſuch a ſituation; and here let me obſerve, that it is both decent and neceſſary, that whoever receives benefit, after having beſought the prayers of the congregation, ſhould, at his firſt coming to church, on his recovery, requeſt the ſame congregation to join with him in giving thanks; otherwiſe he ſubjects himſelf to our Saviour's reproach to the lepers, who, when he had healed ten of them, and only one returned to thank him, ſaid, "Were there not ten cleanſed, "but where are the nine?" After this follows the general thankſgiving, in which

we teſtify our gratitude to God, for all the inſtances of his loving kindneſs to us, and more eſpecially for his having condeſcended to redeem us, by giving his only Son to die for us; and we humbly entreat him, that we may not only with our lips, by empty words, but in our lives, by our deeds alſo, ſhew the ſenſe which we entertain of his kindneſs. Laſt, comes a prayer taken from the Liturgy of Saint Chryſoſtom, one of the moſt celebrated fathers of the Chriſtian church; in it we aſcribe to God the grace which has prompted us to meet together, to put up our petitions to him; we encourage ourſelves with Chriſt's promiſe, that when two or three are gathered together, he is among them; all our deſires, however, we ſubmit to him, aſking only that he will grant ſuch as may be expedient for us, ſuch as may be for our real advantage, among which we may ſpeak with confidence of two particulars—knowledge of his truth, and life everlaſting. Finally, we cloſe with St. Paul's farewell to the Corinthians; SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. thians; praying that the favour of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the love of God, and the reſidence of the Holy Ghoſt, may be always amongſt us.

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON THE LITURGY.

FOURTH PART.

1 CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the underſtanding alſo.

I SHOULD now, if I proceeded regularly in this ſubject, take into conſideration thoſe parts of our evening ſervice, which differ from the morning, and after that explain to you the Litany: but as the celebration of the Lord's ſupper is approaching, I rather chooſe to poſtpone theſe for the preſent, and beg your attention, while I diſcourſe

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courſe on our communion ſervice. It is called the communion ſervice, becauſe, in a part of it, we partake together of the ſacrament of Chriſt's body and blood, the meaning of the word, 'communion' being "a partaking together." The beginning of it, which we uſe, when we do not celebrate the Lord's ſupper, goes by the ſame name. It opens with the Lord's Prayer, which appears peculiarly proper, when we are entering on ſo ſolemn an office. After this follows an old and excellent collect, in which we pray to God, to whom the hearts of all men are open, and their deſires, their imaginations, and their wiſhes, known—to cleanſe, to purify, to make virtuous, the thoughts of ours, by the inſpiration of his holy ſpirit, that is, by breathing into us ſuch good diſpoſitions, that we may, as perfectly as human nature will permit, love him, and worthily magnify his holy name: fitly, properly, both in our converſations and our lives, ſhew the ſenſe that we entertain of his goodneſs. The ten commandments,

mandments, which were delivered by God to Moſes for the uſe of the Jews, and which, from their great excellence, are binding on Chriſtians alſo, are now recited by the miniſter; the people between each of them, on their knees, begging mercy of God for thoſe of them which they may have tranſgreſſed, and beſeeching him to incline their hearts to obey them more perfectly in future. SERM. X.

After them follows a prayer for the king; it being his authority, which is one great ſupport of theſe commandments, and they again contributing, by their influence on the conduct of men, to ſupport his authority.

In this prayer we beſeech of God ſo to rule the king's heart, that he, from being ſenſible that he is God's miniſter, or ſervant, may make it his firſt ſtudy to promote God's glory, which he cannot more effectually do, than by enforcing the obſervance of the above ten commandments, and himſelf ſetting an example of it in his

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own behaviour; we petition, likewiſe, that we, and all his other ſubjects, duly conſidering, remembering as we ought, that his authority is derived from God, that is, that he reigns by God's permiſſion, may faithfully ſerve, honour, and obey him, in God, and for God, according to his bleſſed word and ordinance, that is, in obedience to God's commands in Scripture, ſuch as,—"Honour the king; let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers," and other texts of this tenor. We now repeat again the collect for the day, and after it the miniſter reads two portions of Scripture, uſually from the New Teſtament, the firſt taken generally from the epiſtles, the latter always from the goſpels; the collect, for the moſt part, relates to theſe portions from Scripture, and entreats of God to grant us ſome Chriſtian grace, which is inculcated in them, or may be drawn from them. Though there is no particular direction for it at preſent, it is ſaid always to have been the cuſtom for the people to ſtand

ſtand up at the reading of the goſpel, and likewiſe to make the exclamation at the beginning—"Glory be to thee, O Lord;" this latter, indeed, was in ſome of the very early Engliſh Prayer Books, but was afterwards omitted, for what reaſon I know not; but the cuſtom, with great propriety, has been kept up; for ſurely the gift of the goſpel, the gift of God's only Son, to inſtruct and ſave us, is what, above all other inſtances of his goodneſs, calls on us to unite in glorifying him. If we examine theſe portions of Scripture, called Goſpels (as being taken from the four Lives of our Saviour, which go by that name) we ſhall find that, beginning from the Advent, or near approach of the coming of Jeſus Chriſt, they give us, in the ſetting out of them, the principal parts of his hiſtory, as far as his aſcenſion, or leaving of the earth, and being taken into heaven; and after that, in the ſucceeding parts, they give us inſtructions on the principal heads of our own duty. SERM. X.

SERM. X.

We now repeat another creed, which was drawn up fourteen hundred years ago, by an aſſembly of all the moſt eminent Chriſtian clergy in the world, at the city of Nice, and called from thence the Nicene Creed; on this I ſhall not dwell, as the parts of it which differ from the Apoſtles' Creed are not many, and thoſe, I think, not important for you minutely to conſider, a belief in thoſe parts of it, which are the ſame with the Apoſtles' Creed, is all which is neceſſary, and that I have explained in my Lectures on the Catechiſm. With this creed the common church ſervice uſually concludes, and the remainder of the office is read only when the Lord's ſupper is celebrated. This more ſolemn part of the office opens with detached ſentences from Scripture, being read by the miniſter, exhorting the congregation to liberality and charity, and ſetting forth their merit and value in the ſight of God; in the mean time a gathering of alms, from ſuch as are able to contribute,

is

is made; and this is a time, ſurely, when, above all others, it behoves men to ſhew their love to their diſtreſſed brethren, when they are about to commemorate their dying Saviour's exceſſive love to themſelves. Some of theſe ſentences you will find exhorting you to contribute to the miniſter, it having formerly been a cuſtom to make offerings to him at this time; but that cuſtom being done with, we do not now read them. After this we pray for the whole eſtate of Chriſt's church militant here on earth, that is, for all Chriſtians, of whatever ſect, who are carrying on, as it were, a war with the world, the fleſh and the devil, for this is the meaning of 'militant;'—fighting, contending with. This very comprehenſive prayer is ſo plain, as to require no explanation. Now follows an exhortation from the miniſter to the communicants, which, as it has been much miſunderſtood, there is reaſon to lament that it has been drawn up in ſuch ſtrong terms; it having deterred, it is to be feared, too many, even of well-diſ-

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poſed perſons, from doing an indiſpenſable part of their duty. The phraſes of 'being guilty of the body and blood of Chriſt,' and of 'eating and drinking your own damnation,' are drawn from the xith chapter of St. Paul's firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, which I ſhall endeavour to explain to you. The apoſtle had been told, that the Corinthians, in celebrating the Lord's ſupper, did not diſcern the Lord's body, that is, that they made no difference between this feſtival, which had been appointed by Chriſt, and a common meal; they began without waiting for each other; nay, ſome of them even carried their irreverence ſo far as to be drunken, while others were not able to get any thing. This, the apoſtle tells them, was not to celebrate the Lord's ſupper, for it was entirely to miſtake its nature and deſign; it was not meant for people to ſatisfy their hunger at it; that might be done at home, at their own houſes; but it was meant to keep up a perpetual remembrance of the death of Chriſt,

Chriſt, of his body which was broken, and his blood which was poured out for our ſakes: of theſe the bread and wine are ſigns and tokens, and we are to eat and drink them with reverence and gratitude, making a difference between this and common meals, and reflecting with ſincere thankfulneſs on the amazing act of kindneſs which it repreſents. Now this the Corinthians did *not*; for they behaved juſt as they did at their common meetings, which, St. Paul ſays, is to receive the ſacrament unworthily, and thoſe who do ſo, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, they are guilty of miſ-priſing, of irreverently treating them; and they, therefore, eat and drink their own judgment or condemnation (not damnation), and the meaning of it is, that their irreverence draws on them God's diſpleaſure, which he ſhews, not in damning them to all eternity (for this crime, as well as others, is an object of pardon, if repented of) but in viſiting them with ſickneſs and

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weakneſs, and ſome of them, who are incorrigible, with death.

Now, ſurely, there is no danger that *we* ſhould be guilty of this fault of the Corinthians; *we* well know, when we receive the ſacrament, that it is not a common meal of which we partake; *we* ſhall diſcern the Lord's body; *we* ſhall perceive that it is in remembrance of its having been broken for us, and of his blood having been poured out, that we eat the bread and drink the wine, and, if we have any gratitude in our nature, we cannot but feel it on the occaſion. I do not know that a man's ſinning, after he has partaken of the Lord's ſupper, puts him in a worſe ſtate than if he had not partaken of it, at leaſt, I am ſure, it does not render his ſin unpardonable. St. Peter, you remember, was preſent when Chriſt preſided at it himſelf, and immediately after denied his maſter thrice, and yet we find that on repentance, he met with forgiveneſs: in like manner,

we,

we, if we repent, ſhall be pardoned for any faults we may have committed, though we receive the ſacrament ever ſo often. If, indeed, we are conſcious that we are ſinners, and are not at all ſorry for our ſins, and if we are determined never to try to be better, I know not then what to ſay; it does not then perhaps ſignify what we do:—but only conſider what a ſtate this is for a man to be in! he is, as it were, a candidate for eternal condemnation; he has voluntarily reſigned himſelf, even without an effort, to everlaſting miſery! Think not that I am talking to you either what is fabulous or very diſtant; I ſpeak the words of truth and ſoberneſs; I ſpeak of what is near, even at our doors! We may be called on immediately to anſwer for our neglect of God's commands, but we know that we ſhall certainly be called on before many years are over, and then our final condition is irrevocably fixed. But let me proceed with the explanation of the ſervice.

After

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After ſetting forth in terms, I think, too ſtrong (becauſe they are the occaſions of miſtakes) the danger of receiving the ſacrament unworthily, the exhortation goes on to point out how we may receive it worthily; this is to be done by ſelf-examination, or rather, I think, by recollection, by fixing ſtrongly in our minds the action we are about to perform, by a thorough belief in Chriſt, by a firm purpoſe of amendment of life; by a friendly diſpoſition towards all men; and laſtly, above all, by thankfulneſs to heaven for our redemption. The miniſter then calls on the people to draw near and perform this ſacred act, and firſt, as preparatory to it, to make confeſſion of their ſins.

We muſt conſider this confeſſion (as indeed every other part of the ſervice) before we come to it, and endeavour to work up our minds to the feelings it expreſſes; ſome of the terms in it are ſtrong, ſuch as —" The burden of our ſins is intolerable

" to

" to us"—which perhaps few can ſay in its full extent; but this proceeds from want of reflection in too many of us, who have reaſon enough to be weighed down under the ſenſe of our ſins: and indeed, were it not for Chriſt's death, which we are met to commemorate, this would be the caſe with all; ſo that it may mean the burden of them, if we had none but ourſelves to ſupport them, would be intolerable. SERM. X.

This confeſſion being ended, the miniſter (himſelf one of the ſinners) ſtands up—and, beginning with a declaration of the terms on which God has promiſed forgiveneſs (which are repentance and faith) he prays God to deliver the congregation from all their ſins, to ſtrengthen them in all goodneſs—and, finally, to bring them to everlaſting life.—He then confirms this declaration of pardon; ſhews his authority for it, in four detached ſentences from Scripture, ſpoken by our Lord, and his apoſtles St. Paul and St. John. He then calls on the people to lift up their hearts,

SERM. X. hearts, with gratitude and devotion, to heaven—to which they ſignify their concurrence—"We will lift them up unto the "Lord"—to which follows an invitation to the giving of thanks and the congregation's acknowledgement of its propriety—"It is meet and right ſo to do."

The miniſter, taking up theſe laſt words and ſentiment from the mouth of the people, repeats them (with the addition of a preface on particular days) and declares the union of men, and more particularly of thoſe then preſent with angels and arch-angels in the ſublime employments of thankfulneſs and devotion. Being approached now very nearly to the performance of the moſt ſolemn part, the miniſter declares, in the name of the people, the grounds on which we approach God's holy altar:—that it is not truſting in our own merits, but in his manifold and great mercies; and he beſeeches God to grant that the bleſſed effects of being cleanſed from ſin, and of an union with Chriſt, may be the conſequences of it. Now follows the

conſecration

conſecration of the elements; or, in other words, the prieſt, relating the hiſtory of Chriſt's inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, ſets apart a particular quantity of bread and wine as ſigns, tokens, or repreſentations, of the body and blood of Chriſt. Theſe, after receiving them himſelf, he delivers to the people, with a ſolemn prayer that they may anſwer the purpoſe which God and Chriſt graciouſly intended—that they may preſerve the bodies and ſouls of thoſe who receive them, unto everlaſting life;—and, at the ſame time, he calls on the perſon receiving, for reflection, faith, and thankfulneſs.

All having communicated, we again repeat the Lord's Prayer; having, we may hope by our recent act, ſtrengthened our right to addreſs him by the title of 'Our Father.' We then entirely, that is, with our whole hearts, requeſt of God to accept this our offering of praiſe and thankſgiving, and beg leave to preſent our ſouls and

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and bodies as a ſacrifice, dedicated to his ſervice—and we pray, likewiſe, for our fellow-communicants. As our Saviour and his diſciples, after the celebration of the paſſover, ſung an hymn, ſo, in our ſervice, is one provided for us—"Glory be to God "on high."—The beginning is taken from the hymn of the heavenly hoſt, mentioned by St. Luke; in it we give thanks to God for his great glory, that is, for his glorious work in the redemption of the world, by the death of his only begotten Son. It is uſual afterwards, to read one of the concluding collects, but theſe require no explanation. What remains, is the ſolemn and affectionate form of diſmiſſion, in which the miniſter prays, that "The peace of God, which paſſeth all underſtanding" (that is, the happineſs which ariſes from the knowledge and love of God, which exceeds our utmoſt conceptions) "may keep your hearts and minds, and that all the bleſſings of the Holy Trinity may be diſperſed

amongſt and remain with the congrega- SERM.
tion;—to God, therefore, the Father, the X.
Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all
might, majeſty, and dominion, for ever."

SERMON

SERMON XI.

ON THE LITURGY.

FIFTH PART.

1 CORINTHIANS XIV. PART OF V. 15.

I will pray with the underſtanding alſo.

ONE part of my engagement to explain our uſual church ſervice being yet unfulfilled, permit me now to call your attention to it. I have already diſcourſed on the common morning office; what remains, are thoſe parts of the evening ſervice which differ from the morning, and the Litany. The difference between the morning, and evening ſervice conſiſts in the hymns, which follow the two leſſons, and in the

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SERM. XI. ſecond or third collects; in other reſpects they are the ſame. The hymn appointed to follow the firſt leſſon in the evening is that which the bleſſed Virgin, the mother of Jeſus Chriſt, repeated, when, in viſiting her couſin Elizabeth (the mother of John Baptiſt), ſhe received from her a confirmation of the tidings, which ſhe had before heard from the angel, that ſhe ſhould be the parent of the expected Redeemer of mankind:—"My ſoul doth magnify (doth "adore and reverence) the Lord, and my "ſpirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour; "for he hath regarded the lowlineſs (the "humble condition) of his handmaiden, "for lo! from henceforth all generations "ſhall call me Bleſſed,"—ſhall ſpeak of my happineſs, in being advanced to this high dignity of being mother of the promiſed Saviour of the world. "For he that is "mighty hath magnified me (for the all-"powerful God hath thus advanced me) "and holy is his name;" praiſed be his name for it. "And his mercy is on them "that

" that fear him throughout all generations. SERM.
" He hath ſhewed ſtrength with his arm, XI.
" He hath ſcattered the proud in the ima-
" gination of their hearts;" he hath confounded and overthrown the preſumptuous and haughty oppoſers of his deſigns, even by means of the imaginations, the thoughts of their own hearts. " He hath put down
" the mighty from their ſeats, and hath
" exalted the humble and meek." This may relate either to the general dealings of God with mankind, or to his preſent intention in that ſon, to whom the virgin was about to give birth; he will depoſe the proud Jew from that lofty place which he hath hitherto held, and will exalt the meek Chriſtian in his ſtead. " He hath filled
" the hungry with good things, and the
" rich he hath ſent empty away;" he hath advanced the poor good man to unexpected opulence, and hath brought down the arrogant wealthy man to beggary.—" He, re-
" membering his mercy, hath holpen his
" ſervant Iſrael, as he promiſed to our fore-

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" fathers Abraham and his ſeed for ever;" he is now about to perform his engagement to Abraham and his true deſcendants in the birth of the Meſſiah:—" In thy ſeed " ſhall all the nations of the earth be bleſſed."

Of the cauſe of the joy of the bleſſed Virgin we all partake, and therefore may very properly (with ſome little allowance) repeat this hymn; for by the birth of Jeſus Chriſt we are all redeemed from a ſtate of ſin and death, and put into a condition, if we are willing to comply with the eaſy terms, of obtaining everlaſting ſalvation.

The hymn, which we repeat after the ſecond leſſon, is likewiſe taken from St. Luke; it is the thankſgiving of Simon, a pious and good old man, who was expecting the coming of the promiſed Saviour, and to whom it had been revealed that he ſhould not die till he had ſeen the Lord Chriſt. He came by the guidance of the ſpirit into the temple, at the time when Jeſus was introduced by his parents, and immediately being filled with the Holy Ghoſt, he took him in his

his arms, and ſaid, " Lord, now letteſt thou " thy ſervant depart in peace according to " thy word, for mine eyes have ſeen thy " ſalvation;"—I am content now, O Lord, to lay down my life, now that I have lived to behold, according to thy promiſe, the Redeemer of mankind, " whom thou haſt " prepared before the face of all people, to " be a light to lighten the Gentiles (to " guide all the nations of the earth to true " religion) and to be the glory of thy people " Iſrael,"—to thoſe of them at leaſt, who own Jeſus to be the Chriſt. I omit to mention thoſe other two hymns, which it is at the miniſter's choice to repeat inſtead of theſe, for the ſame reaſon that I omitted thoſe which follow the morning leſſons, becauſe, I think, they are now rarely, if ever, uſed. SERM. XI.

Of the two collects in the evening ſervice, which differ from thoſe in the morning, the firſt is for peace; we beſeech God, from whom all religious thoughts, all pious ſuggeſtions, and all good actions do proceed,

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to pour into our hearts that peace and tranquillity, which it is not in the power of the world to beſtow; that we may be fully determined to obey the divine commandments; and reſting ſecure that we are under God's protection, may paſs quiet and undiſturbed, the time of our abode here on earth. The other collect, which is peculiar to the evening ſervice, is for God's aid and protection, in the dangers ariſing from darkneſs of mind, ignorance, and the perils, alſo, of the night.

I now proceed, according to the plan I formerly laid down, to a conſideration of the Litany. The meaning of the word 'Litany' is an earneſt ſupplication to God; in that of ours, almoſt all the ſins which a Chriſtian ſhould avoid, and all the graces which he ſhould ſeek, are particularly enumerated; ſo that it has this added to the other good in it, to recommend it, that it ſerves to bring to our minds many offences, of which, otherwiſe, we might not have noticed that we were guilty, and admoniſhes

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us of the neceſſity of ſome virtues, which we might not elſe have known that we were to aim at. Moſt parts of it are very plain; I ſhall only ſpeak of thoſe few, with regard to which there may be any hazard of their being not underſtood. Thoſe ſhort ejaculations,—"Good Lord deliver us,—we be-"ſeech thee to hear us, good Lord," which the people are ordered to repeat at frequent intervals, belong to the preceding ſentences which the miniſter has ſpoken, and he likewiſe is underſtood to join in them; they were judged to have a better effect than if the whole ſupplication were repeated without any breaks, as they recall attention, which is but too apt to wander, and render the congregation, by the very act of repeating them, more warm and fervent in their petitions. The Litany opens, firſt, with a ſeparate addreſs to each perſon of the bleſſed Trinity, and then to them all jointly; theſe the people repeat at length after the miniſter. Jeſus Chriſt is then beſought, by the title of Lord, to forget our offences, and the of-

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fences of our forefathers; not to take vengeance on us for our ſins, but to ſpare us to whom he has already ſhewn ſo much love, as to redeem us with his moſt precious blood.—We, after this, put up our prayers againſt divers ſins and various evils, natural and moral: the words uſed can ſcarce be made plainer by any explanation; I ſhall merely notice ſome particular phraſes. The phraſe, 'blindneſs of heart,' means either ignorance of God and his perfections, or ſelf-deception, thinking ourſelves ſuperior to what we are; more wiſe, more religious, or more virtuous. By 'deadly 'ſin,' we may underſtand ſuch as are wilful, deliberate, and preſumptuous; ſins into which we are not betrayed by paſſion, but which we commit with our eyes open, conſiderately knowing them at the time to be, in the very higheſt degree, diſpleaſing to God, and prejudicial to our ſouls. Some object to our praying againſt ſudden death; but, ſurely, the generality of men have but too much reaſon to do it; few only have their

their lamps ſo prepared, as not to have cauſe to be deſirous of a ſhort ſpace in which to trim them, before the bridegroom really arrives. But to thoſe who may think there is little to be done in a laſt illneſs (and indeed, it is to be feared, by them who truſt entirely to it, that there is not much) or who may really be prepared for death at any time, and may therefore think it unneceſſary to pray againſt being cut off ſuddenly, it may be replied, that if a little warning be not neceſſary on their own accounts, it is at leaſt eligible on account of their friends; to take off the ſhock which their ſudden removal might occaſion, to get a ſhort time to ſettle their worldly concerns (though theſe, as well as their ſpiritual, ſhould always be in all practical readineſs) and, laſtly, to afford them an opportunity of giving their dying advice and example to the ſurvivors. We pray againſt all ſedition, privy conſpiracy, and rebellion, that is, againſt all traiterous deſigns againſt the king or govern- SERM. XI.

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government; we pray againſt all falſe doctrine, hereſy, and ſchiſm; by 'falſe doctrine,' we may underſtand the believing or diſbelieving contrary to what the Scriptures contain, and 'hereſy' has, I think, much the ſame meaning; the ſenſe of 'ſchiſm,' is diviſion in the church; we pray againſt all ſeparation among Chriſtians, that we may all (as St. Paul adviſes) ſpeak the ſame thing; that we may be perfectly joined together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgment. Having offered our petitions for deliverance from various evils, we beſeech Chriſt to grant us what we aſk, by the myſtery of his holy incarnation, and by the other leading circumſtances of his hiſtory, whilſt he was upon earth; by 'Chriſt's holy incarnation,' is meant his becoming fleſh, his taking upon him man's nature. When we beſeech him to relieve our wants by this and the other particulars mentioned, we mean, by their means, and on their account; and the immenſe goodneſs which he ſhewed to the

the human race in them, gives us ground and foundation for our hopes of a favourable hearing. SERM. XI.

As we have need of the favour and protection of heaven at all ſeaſons, we pray for it in all times of our wealth, which means proſperity,—in all times of our tribulation, which means adverſity,—we being in as much real danger, perhaps, in the former ſtate as in the latter; we pray likewiſe for mercy at that ſolemn and concluding ſeaſon of our trial, "the hour of "death," and at that period, which will determine our lot for ever, "the day of "judgment." When we have thus concluded our petitions for ourſelves, we proceed to enlarge and extend them in behalf of our brethren, in behalf of mankind in general; and, firſt, we begin by praying for God's guidance of the holy Chriſtian church; we then offer our ſupplications for our ſuperiors, temporal and ſpiritual; and we conclude by preſenting a variety of interceſſions for all mankind, in all their

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principal wants, neceſſities, diſtreſſes, and emergencies; but this is done in ſo clear and plain a manner, as to require no explanation. The miniſter and people now endeavour to ſtir up and enliven their devotion by repeating, alternately, ſeveral ſhort ſentences, tending to beſeech heaven that they may be graciouſly heard and anſwered. —Some repetitions are here made uſe of: but I have before obſerved to you, that all repetitions cannot be conſidered as vain, when we remember that our Saviour himſelf prayed three times preciſely in the ſame words. Now follows the Lord's prayer, and then we beg of God not to deal with us after our ſins, or reward us after our iniquities: the word 'after,' being here uſed in an uncommon ſenſe, it may be neceſſary to mention that it means in both theſe places—according to,—that is, treat us not according to what our ſins and iniquities have deſerved. The next prayer is ſaid to have been introduced into the Litany above a thouſand years ago, on ſome diſtreſſes

treſſes under which the Chriſtians then la- SERM.
boured; but as all Chriſtians labour under XI.
diſtreſſes or dangers of ſome kind or other, temporal or ſpiritual, it has a very ſignificant meaning, and may properly be uſed at all times. The people at the cloſe of this prayer, inſtead of the uſual 'Amen,' beg of Chriſt to ariſe, and deliver them for his name's ſake, that is, for the ſake of their bearing his name, the name of Chriſtians. The miniſter next ſets forth, that we have heard or read, or have had handed down by our forefathers, the noble works that God did for thoſe who were his people, that is, for the Jews firſt, and afterwards for Chriſtians; and the congregation then beſeech him to riſe and deliver them for his honour, not on account of their deſerts, but of his own perfections; that from the experience of his loving kindneſs all may learn to ſerve and adore him. We now repeat the doxology, or, in other words, give praiſe and glory to the ever bleſſed Trinity, in the ſame form as we have done

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frequently before in other parts of the ſervice, particularly after the Pſalms; and after ſeveral ſhort ejaculations, expreſſing our entreaties to God for protection and mercy, we conclude with a more continued form of prayer to the ſame purpoſe:—"We "humbly beſeech thee, O Father, merci-"fully to look upon our infirmities, and "for the glory of thy name turn from us "all thoſe evils that we moſt righteouſly "have deſerved:"—the word 'righte-'ouſly' here means—juſtly, that we moſt juſtly have deſerved; what remains of this prayer is ſufficiently clear. The concluſion of the Litany being the ſame as the concluſion of the morning ſervice, it is not neceſſary that I ſhould repeat what I have already ſaid on it.

And thus I have brought my diſcourſes on our church ſervice to a period; in which I have endeavoured to avoid the two oppoſite extremes of too great or too little particularity, either of hazarding to weary you by dwelling too minutely on the ſubject, or omitting

omitting to explain things which really require it. Would to God that I may have succeeded in any degree in rendering it more intelligible to you! Would to God that I may have succeeded in rendering it more delightful in your eyes! SERM. XI.

Let me prevail on you to shew your delight in it by a more constant attendance at its celebration. It is with no small concern that I am compelled to say, that I have too much reason to admonish you on this head. Surely once a week, for one short hour, to meet with your brethren to offer your prayers and thanksgivings to your Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, is no hard service! Can we possibly do less for that beneficent Being, who hath done so much for us? Whatever causes of dissatisfaction you may have with the manner of the service being performed, you cannot complain that it is not performed constantly and at the appointed hours. Would to God you would give your minister a decisive proof that you are not dissatisfied with it on other accounts, by meet-

SERM. XI. meeting him conſtantly as the Sabbath returns! He can have but little reaſon, till he ſees you do this, to congratulate himſelf on the ſucceſs of his labours. But it is not enough that you attend regularly at divine ſervice; you muſt be attentive and devout, whilſt you are there, and if your thoughts will ſometimes wander to earthly ſubjects (as they too often will) you muſt anxiouſly and ſpeedily recall them. You will do well to be minutely exact in repeating all which the congregation is ordered to repeat, and in joining, in your hearts, in each of the prayers as they are read by the miniſter, and ſaying 'Amen' aloud at the concluſion. You will likewiſe do well in obſerving the directions of your prayer-books, when you are to ſtand or kneel, and in complying exactly with them, as it ſhews decency of behaviour, and Chriſtian ſubmiſſion to the orders of your ſuperiors. To conclude, come as frequently to church, and behave, when you are here, with that reverence and devotion, which, when the tremendous hour of

of death approaches, and much more at the awful day of judgment, you will moſt ſincerely and ardently wiſh that you had done! SERM. XI.

Now to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed all might, majeſty, and dominion, now and for ever. Amen.

SERMON XII.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOUR AND KING.

ST. JOHN iii. 16.

God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten ſon, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.

WHEN the Almighty firſt created man he endued him with a capacity of knowing his duty, and with a ſtrong inclination to practiſe it: in defiance, however, of this knowledge, and in contradiction to this inclination, Adam fell from his obedience, and, by his tranſgreſſion, brought, not only on himſelf, but alſo on his poſterity, miſery and death. Wickedneſs, which was

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thus introduced into the world, increaſed ſo dreadfully within the ſpace of ſeventeen hundred years, that God was provoked to overwhelm the earth with a flood of waters, and to deſtroy all fleſh. One family only, which had remained unpolluted amidſt the general contagion of vice, was preſerved, and from that was the world afterwards peopled. We find, however, as the deſcendants of Noah multiplied and ſpread themſelves upon the earth, that, notwithſtanding this dreadful example of God's vengeance on the wicked (the remembrance of which could not poſſibly have been ſoon done away) they, within a ſhort time, began to degenerate, they forgot entirely the true God, and immerſed themſelves in all manner of iniquity. With the Jews, indeed, by particular revelations from heaven, and the immediate ſuperintendance of the Almighty, the true knowledge of him was retained; but even *they* frequently turned aſide to idolatry, and were, in their moral conduct, deſperately abandoned; while all the

the other nations of the earth paid their devotions to ſtocks and ſtones, or to men wicked and frail as themſelves, and were ſo far from conforming themſelves to the obligations of virtue, that they were deplorably ignorant in what it conſiſted. SERM. XII.

This was the ſtate of things, when it pleaſed God "to ſend his only-begotten "Son into the world, to the end that all "that believe in him ſhould not periſh, "but have everlaſting life." Conſidering the great and manifold provocations which God had received, it might have been expected that he would have ſent his ſon upon a far different errand, to take vengeance on ſuch a rebellious race, to puniſh and to extirpate; but, no! Jeſus Chriſt was ſent to inſtruct and to ſave, to inform us of our duty, and to redeem our immortal ſouls; in other words, to be our Saviour and our King.—It is under theſe two characters then that we will conſider the Son of the Almighty.

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You will obſerve in the text that it is not ſaid *abſolutely* that *all* ſhould have everlaſting life through the Son of God, but that all that *believe* in him; the promiſe of ſalvation and immortality is limited to believers; there is a condition annexed to it, —the believing in him through whom it is offered—which implies, that if we do not believe in him, we ſhall not be in the number of thoſe who ſhall partake of the benefits of his coming.

It becomes then a matter of importance, to enquire what believing in Jeſus is. To believe in Jeſus, is to be thoroughly perſuaded that he is the only-begotten ſon of God, that he is the brightneſs of his father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon; that he was ſent into the world by God, and that the end of his appearance was to make known the will of heaven, and to die to atone for the ſins of men. All this, you will ſay, we are very ready to do; the wonderful works which he did, and the angelic doctrines which he taught, ſpeak for

for him; we acknowledge him to have been the Meſſiah, the ſon of the moſt High! So far it is well; but there is yet more in believing in Jeſus, and it will be well indeed, if you can anſwer with equal readineſs to what remains: believing in Jeſus comprehends likewiſe a conviction of the goodneſs and importance of the leſſons which he taught, and not only this, but the uniform and ſettled practice of them; without obedience to his commands, our faith in his divinity will be of no effect, our profeſſions of it, however frequently repeated, will be merely ſolemn mockeries: it will be a lame, an impotent, a deficient faith, it will not be a faith unto ſalvation. SERM. XII.

And here the other part of Chriſt's character comes to be conſidered, that of King; he came to rule as well as to ſave us! we muſt accept him in both characters, or in neither; if we refuſe to be his ſubjects, his coming will have availed us nothing; if we will not be obedient to his laws, we ſhall not be entitled to his protection. Allegi-

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ance and protection are reciprocal, even between earthly monarchs and their ſubjects; where a man diſowns the authority of the prince, he forfeits all pretenſions to his care, he becomes an outlaw, and, of courſe, can claim no benefit from the government which he deſpiſes; how much more then muſt this be the caſe with him, who ſets at nought the precepts of the Son of the moſt high God! and yet, I fear, there are too many, who are willing enough to accept Chriſt as their Saviour, but cannot bring themſelves to receive him as their King, who would gladly appropriate to themſelves the glorious privileges which belong to his diſciples, but cannot be prevailed on to comply with the eſſential conditions. Examine the Scriptures, and you will find them uniformly aſſerting, that the virtues of a good life are the only terms on which we can claim to ourſelves the merits of our Lord's death. St. John the Baptiſt, the forerunner of Chriſt, and Chriſt himſelf, began their preaching in the ſame manner:

manner:—"Repent ye, or rather, reform ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" as if they had ſaid, Break off your ſins, and turn yourſelves to a life of righteouſneſs, that ye may be ready to receive the goſpel, and may become proper objects of its privileges. Our Saviour, in the courſe of his miniſtry, commands his diſciples to be exemplary in good works: "Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that "they may ſee your good works, and glo-"rify your Father, which is in heaven." In the ſame diſcourſe he ſays, "Except "your righteouſneſs (that is, your practice "of what is right) ſhall exceed the righte-"ouſneſs of the ſcribes and phariſees, ye "ſhall, in no caſe, enter into the kingdom "of heaven." And to this effect you will find the conſtant language both of our Lord and his apoſtles. Nor indeed could it in reaſon be otherwiſe; eternal life was originally meant for thoſe only, who had no taint or infection of ſin whatever, for God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; therefore, SERM. XII.

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therefore, after the fall of Adam, and the conſequent degeneracy of his poſterity, all mankind became obnoxious to the wrath of God, and had he not mercifully found out a way to reconcile them to himſelf, they could never have hoped to become objects of his favour. He, however, out of his boundleſs benevolence, did find out a way, he ſent his only Son upon earth to die for them. But, can it be thought that he intended, by ſo doing, to leave them entirely under the dominion of their vicious paſſions? Can it be thought that from that time it was his deſign to beſtow eternal happineſs upon them, without any exertions of their own whatever? that they who, in a ſtate of nature, were only to be accepted on perfect obedience, in a ſtate of grace had nothing to do but to ſit down, to eat, to drink, and to be merry;—to be as wicked as paſſion tranſported, or temptation invited them? The very idea is a derogation from the purity of God.

The

The original law given to man was— SERM.
'Obey and live,—tranſgreſs and die;' by XII.
the Chriſtian law, the ſeverity of this firſt law is mitigated; but to whom is it mitigated? not to thoſe who continue in their tranſgreſſions until their death, but to thoſe, who by a timely repentance eſtabliſh themſelves in ſuch habits, as may appeaſe the diſpleaſure of the Almighty, and render them fit companions for the bleſſed ſaints above. Without the acquiſition of virtuous habits (which can alone be gained by the conſtant practice of virtue, and the ſincere love of it) we ſhould not only be totally unworthy of the ſociety of heavenly ſpirits, but abſolutely unable to partake of their happineſs, were it poſſible we could intrude ourſelves amongſt them.

Chriſtianity, no leſs than the religion of nature, commands from her votaries perfection; but here is the difference between the two—the latter accepts of nothing but a perfection, which is abſolute; while, through Chriſt, the earneſt and conſtant

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endeavours of his diſciples will be accepted, however ſhort they may fall of ſucceſs.—This is a point, which requires well to be underſtood. Chriſt came upon earth to ſave us from the rigour of divine juſtice, which can take up with nothing but an unſinning obedience; but an unſinning obedience is what no man ever arrives at; we ſhould all therefore, but for Chriſt, be expoſed to the wrath of God; on our ſincere *endeavours*, however, Chriſt interpoſes, and protects us; the *will*, through him, will be taken for the *deed*; but if we do not *endeavour*, his ſufferings and death will, as far as concerns us, have been in vain.

But beſides thoſe who are deſirous to accept Chriſt as their Saviour, though not willing to receive him as their King, there are others who renounce him in both characters,—who either neglect to examine into the juſtice of his pretenſions, or, taking ſome offence at his life and doctrine, altogether refuſe to acknowledge him. It is not, I believe, uncommon for perſons of this kind

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to reaſon thus:—Faith, ſay they, is not an act of the will, it is an act of the underſtanding; we would believe, if we could ſee reaſon, but we really cannot, and therefore, though the goſpel ſhould be true, we hope to meet with pardon.—But, I ſay, ſuppoſing the goſpel to be true, which it certainly is, theſe hopes are entirely fallacious; for God has doubtleſs given us every proof of its truth, which is neceſſary, in reaſon, to convince us; and if, notwithſtanding, we reject it, it muſt proceed from obſtinacy, pride, or ſome other bad paſſion; well, therefore, may the apoſtle ſay—"If our "goſpel is hid, it is hid to them that are "loſt." SERM. XII.

Let *us* then believe in the goſpel, and let us endeavour to live up to its commands, for we may be aſſured that the day will come when the profane infidel will be terribly convinced of the criminality of his indolence and obſtinacy,—the day will come, when it will ſorely repent him of the ſcoffs which he has thrown out againſt our holy religion, and the contempt

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contempt with which he has treated its profeſſors; then ſhall he call on the mountains and rocks to fall on him, and to hide him from the face of his Judge who ſitteth on the throne; of him, whom he rejected as his Saviour, and deſpiſed as his King; then perhaps, when the laſt trumpet ſhall have awakened him from the dead, ſhall he ſay—'Yonder cometh that Jeſus, whoſe name I 'blaſphemed, whoſe merits I denied, whoſe 'mediation and protection I ſuperciliouſly 'refuſed; but, ah! how unlike to what 'he was deſcribed at his firſt coming! no 'longer the ſon of humble parents—the 'companion of the wretched—the ſervant 'of the lowly,—but ſurrounded with my-'riads of angels—clothed in the majeſty of 'the great God—the Prince of the univerſe '—the Judge of all men—the terrible, the 'unpitying avenger of his enemies!'

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ORIGIN OF EVIL.

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH iii. 32, 33.

For though he cauſe grief, yet will he have compaſſion according to the multitude of his mercies.

For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

THE miſery of human life has been the univerſal complaint of all ages and of all ranks of men; the high as well as the low, the rich as well as the poor, equally confeſs and lament that permanent happineſs is no where to be found. Of the juſtice of this com-

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complaint we may be convinced, both from what we may obſerve paſſing around us, and alſo from our own experience:—diſappointment in the purſuit, and diſſatisfaction in the poſſeſſion of the objects of their deſire;—loſſes, ſickneſſes, and diſgraces, are ſome or other of them the portion of almoſt the whole of mankind. The obſervation of this conſtitution of human affairs has afforded occaſion, to ſome, to diſbelieve in the being of a God; and to others, to arraign his goodneſs: and even of thoſe whoſe preſumption does not carry them ſuch daring lengths, it has driven too many into diſcontent and deſpondency—highly unbecoming of them, both as men and as Chriſtians.

I propoſe, in this diſcourſe, firſt, to endeavour to clear up the difficulty of the exiſtence of miſery, and to reconcile it with the benevolence of the great Creator and Governor of all things; and, ſecondly, to point out the unreaſonableneſs and ingratitude of diſcontent and deſpondency.

I will

I will endeavour to clear up the difficulty of the exiſtence of miſery, and to reconcile it with the benevolence of God. SERM. XIII.

When man was firſt created, he was created innocent and happy; had he and his poſterity perſevered in their innocence, their happineſs had ſtill been continued to them —neither miſery nor death would have found entrance into the world. To try his obedience, a certain condition was propoſed;—the favour of his Maker was promiſed him on his obſerving it—the puniſhment of its violation was death:—Seduced by the artifices of the grand deceiver, and abuſing the gift of free-will, with which God had endowed him, he fell; he tranſgreſſed the law which was impoſed on him—he ate of the tree, whereof it had been commanded him that he ſhould not eat; and, by his tranſgreſſion, entailed on himſelf and his poſterity—woe and death.

If this be the true cauſe of the evils which we ſee in the world, as we are aſſured by the Bible that it is, it is clear that they cannot

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be charged on God; he created man happy —he gave him an eaſy law to obey—he told him what terrible conſequences would follow, if he broke this law:—yet, with his eyes open, he voluntarily *did* break it; therefore himſelf alone can he juſtly blame for all the dreadful effects of his rebellion. But ſtill further—as unhappineſs was not the original lot of mankind, ſo neither ſhall it be the final lot:—ſin and miſery entered into the world by Adam, but it was not God's intention that they ſhould reign there for ever—he has opened a way, by the ſufferings and death of our Redeemer, for the penitent part of his ſubjects to regain his favour—to recover the dignity of their natures—and to be again, what they were at firſt created in Paradiſe, innocent and happy! Surely this is a conſideration which will not only vindicate the goodneſs of God from any impeachment, but will exhibit it even in a more amiable light, than if man had never offended nor been condemned. Reflect—you were created happy, by your own

own faults you became miſerable; your Creator, notwithſtanding, redeemed you from this ſtate; he bought you with a price, and, merciful God! with what a price—even with the blood of his only Son—and the only penance for your guilt is a mixture of miſery with happineſs, in that ſhort interval which paſſes between the cradle and the grave. SERM. XIII.

But, to ſet this matter in a ſtill ſtronger light, there is much reaſon to believe that thoſe ſufferings, to which we are expoſed in this world, are abſolutely neceſſary for the recovery of that perfection, in which we were firſt created, and for the regaining of that dignity and purity which we forfeited by the fall: this concluſion is ſupported by many paſſages in Scripture, wherein the Almighty is introduced, expreſſing his unwillingneſs to afflict the children of men, and aſſigning their improvement in goodneſs and holineſs, as the reaſon and ground of his chaſtiſement. It is likewiſe confirmed by what we read of paſt ages, and

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what we ſee in our own: the beſt and moſt virtuous characters, which hiſtory, either ſacred or profane, hath handed down to us, were, generally ſpeaking, thoſe who were moſt exerciſed in afflictions; and we cannot but, ourſelves, have obſerved the tendency of proſperity to corrupt,—of adverſity to purify the heart; what is true of individuals, is probably true of the whole; we have, therefore, a preſumptive proof that the miſery, which was introduced by ſin, is abſolutely neceſſary to bring us back to virtue; and thus the afflictions, with which God viſits his children, become the higheſt favours,—his ſevereſt chaſtiſements, the moſt tender mercies. Upon the whole, I truſt that the goodneſs of God will ſtand clearly vindicated; we were created happy at firſt, till by our own fault we became miſerable; it will again be our own fault, if we are not happy at the laſt; God deſires it, and has graciouſly invented a way to bring it about: and ſtill farther, the ſublunary cares and ſorrows to which we are,

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in the mean time, liable, are the neceſſary ſteps to our reſtoration. SERM. XIII.

Having thus ſhewn that the miſeries, which are to be met with in human life, are no impeachment of the benevolence of the Almighty, I now proceed to what I propoſed in the ſecond place, to point out the unreaſonableneſs and ingratitude of diſcontent and deſpondency. Each of thoſe arguments, which I have been uſing, to free from imputation the goodneſs of God in permitting or inflicting evils, is equally efficacious to ſilence the murmurs of thoſe individuals, to whoſe lot they fall: they were not originally deſigned for us, but having been introduced by the folly and guilt of our firſt anceſtor, they are neceſſary and unavoidable; and not only ſo, but they are in a high degree ſalutary and medicinal; and if we make that uſe of them, which we are expected to make, and may make, if we are ſo diſpoſed, they will be the means of our reſtoration to our original dignity and happineſs; they will endure but for a mo-

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ment, and will work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Here I might reſt the cauſe; the above conſiderations are alone ſufficient to prove the injuſtice of diſcontent and deſpondency, in any ſituation, however miſerable; but there is yet more that may be ſaid, which will place it in ſtill more glaring colours.

Though it muſt be allowed, that ſome portion of miſery will fall to the ſhare of all men; that no prudence, virtue, or good fortune, can entirely eſcape it; yet I believe that it may be aſſumed, and will hold true for the moſt part, that the hours which we ſpend in eaſe and happineſs are greatly ſuperior, in number, to thoſe which are paſſed in miſery and pain. Even in this life, there are many poſitive pleaſures that the virtuous enjoy, which, generally ſpeaking, far overbalance their woes. Let us view our condition with impartial eyes, and be juſt to the bounty of heaven. Happineſs, even on earth, is ſown with no ſcanty hand, if we have but the diſpoſition to reap it.

Ungrate-

Ungrateful as we are, we number and exaggerate our ſorrows, while we ſuffer our various enjoyments to paſs unheeded! Do we count as nothing the comforts which ariſe from the conſtant intercourſe with our Maker by religion, the ſatisfaction of an approving conſcience, and the hopes of eternal felicity, through the merits and death of our Redeemer? Heavy indeed muſt be the calamities that can outweigh theſe ſolid bleſſings, which all, if it be not their own fault, may enjoy. Others there are of an inferior order indeed, but which by no means deſerve to be overlooked. Do we count as nothing the enjoyment of health, the innocent gratifications of ſenſe, the contemplation of the various beauties of the univerſe, the ſatisfaction of eternal thought and reflection, the pleaſures of converſation and ſociety, and the endearing intercourſe of domeſtic love? How we deſerved theſe *nothings*, it would be difficulty for us to ſay, which ought alone to repreſs our complaints when they are withdrawn from us. Of SERM. XIII.

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ſome indeed, and theſe much the moſt valuable, we cannot be deprived but by ourſelves, and if we will but retain *theſe*, they will amply compenſate and conſole us for the loſs of the others. There are, therefore, many poſitive pleaſures in this life, the greateſt of which *all* either do or might enjoy; pleaſures which, for the moſt part, far exceed, both in duration and weight, the proportion of woes which are intermixed with them. Is it not then the higheſt ingratitude, after we have been, for a long time, experiencing great and unmerited favours at the hands of God, if the ſcene a little varies and preſents us with darker proſpects, to be impatient and diſcontented?

But ſtill farther, if the matter be accurately examined, we ſhall find that many of the evils, which are the ſubject of our haſty complaints, are brought on us by our own imprudence: diſappointments frequently ariſe from unreaſonable expectations; that degree of poverty, which is highly oppreſſive and diſgraceful, is the general

general product of idleneſs; ſickneſs is, in many inſtances, cauſed by intemperance; the loſs of reputation, by vice or folly: in theſe caſes, ſhame, one would think, ſhould ſilence our murmurs, and prevent us from attributing to the conſtitution of human affairs, what is only to be imputed to ourſelves. SERM. XIII.

Inſtances indeed may be met with, where the miſery of particular individuals greatly overbalance their happineſs, and where, perhaps, it could have been prevented by no exertions of prudence or of virtue: thoſe, however, to whoſe lot this may fall, are not (as I have ſhewn in the beginning of this diſcourſe) without abundant reaſons for conſolation; though woe be their preſent portion, it will ariſe from their own negligence, if it be not converted into bliſs; heavineſs may endure for a night, but, by patience and piety, joy cometh in the morning.

Let us then enjoy, with moderation and gratitude, the bounties of God, and let us ſubmit with manly firmneſs to his chaſtiſements;

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ments; let us eſteem them, as they are, but as different modes of his goodneſs; let us underſtand them, as they are meant, as trials of our virtue, and correctors of our hearts; and let us reſt aſſured, that if we carry ourſelves under them with truly religious reſignation, we ſhall entitle ourſelves to the benediction produced by our Saviour on thoſe who mourn; and at the great day of retribution ſhall, in return for tranſitory pain and ſorrow, be recompenſed with an eternity of bliſs and glory.

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SERMON XIV.

THE IMPROPRIETY OF JUDGING OF THE MISFORTUNES OF OTHERS.

ST. LUKE xiii. 3.

I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

THE occaſion on which theſe words were ſpoken, was this; it had juſt been related to our Saviour, that Pilate, the Roman governor, had mingled the blood of ſome Galileans with their ſacrifices, i. e. that he had put them to death whilſt they were ſacrificing at the altar; from which account Jeſus takes an opportunity (as was uſual with him

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him on moſt occurrences) to inculcate on his followers ſome uſeful religious inſtruction. "Suppoſe ye (ſays he) that theſe "Galileans were ſinners above all the Ga- "lileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things? "I tell you, Nay, but, except ye repent, "ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh."

Two inſtructive leſſons are to be drawn from hence; firſt, that when we ſee misfortunes fall on our neighbours, it is very wrong in us to interpret them into judgments—to conclude that they have happened to them on account of their ſins; and, ſecondly, that the right uſe to make of them would be (without conſidering them at all as relating to others, or endeavouring to pry curiouſly into God's diſpenſations) to apply them to ourſelves, to take warning by them, and to break off our ſins by repentance, leſt the ſame, or worſe, calamities overtake us.

Our Saviour well knew the heart of man; for it is certain that we are very much inclined to aſſign the ſufferings which

which others undergo, to ſome ſins, either open or ſecret, of which they have been guilty: whether it be that we are induced to it from a deſire of attributing our own exemption from the ſame misfortunes to our innocence, or whether we are flattered with appearing to underſtand God's diſpenſations, or whether we think it a mark of piety to cenſure thoſe whom the Almighty afflicts;—the fact is, that it is greatly the cuſtom among men, when any one is attacked by ſome remarkable calamity, to be immediately ſearching for, and endeavouring to diſcover, the occaſion of it in his iniquities. From whatever cauſe this practice proceeds, it is very preſumptuous and unreaſonable, and not only ſo, but it is moſt probably in general unjuſt; ſince our Saviour peremptorily denies that any ſuch concluſions can, with certainty, be collected:—"Suppoſe ye that theſe Ga-"lileans were ſinners above all the Gali-"leans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things; "or thoſe eighteen upon whom the tower of

SERM. XIV. " of Siloam fell, and ſlew them," (alluding " to another late occurrence) think ye that " they were ſinners above all men that " dwelt in Jeruſalem? I tell you, Nay."

If we look into the hiſtory of paſt times, we ſhall find that many of thoſe characters, who endured the greateſt calamities, ſo far from being more wicked than thoſe who lived at the ſame time, were eminently diſtinguiſhed for their piety and virtue; and yet, even ſome of theſe were reproached for ſuffering in conſequence of their ſins. The misfortunes of Job, you know, were cauſed by his virtue; it was that which drew on him the envy and malice of the devil; yet his friends, ſeeing what he underwent, although they could not, with all their ill-natured penetration, diſcover any open ſtain in his life and manners, and, although they had been witneſſes of his continued piety and uprightneſs, yet they would have it that he was vicious in ſecret; that, though his actions were apparently virtuous, his principles and his heart

heart were corrupt. When, after the ſhip- SERM. XIV.
wreck of St. Paul, the viper faſtened on his hand, how ready were the people amongſt whom he was, to cry out, "No doubt this "man is a murderer, whom, though he "has eſcaped the ſea, yet vengeance ſuf- "fereth not to live." They looked when he ſhould have experienced the uſual effects of the bite of a venomous beaſt, "when he "ſhould have ſwollen, or fallen down "dead." So, likewiſe, on meeting with the man that was blind from his birth, the diſciples of our Saviour aſked him, "Maſter "who did ſin, this man or his parents, "that he was born blind?"—ſo cloſely did they connect together ſin and misfortune; but Jeſus anſwered, "neither hath this "man ſinned, nor his parents, but that "the works of God ſhould be made mani- "feſt in him;" that is, 'that I might have 'an opportunity of proving to you, that I 'am a meſſenger ſent from God, by work- 'ing his cure;'—which he accordingly did.

Indeed

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Indeed there are ſo many reaſons, for which misfortunes may fall on a perſon beſides his ſins, that candour ſhould always prevent us from putting upon them that conſtruction. Had there, indeed, been no wickedneſs among men, there had been no miſery; they entered the world together; every man has done ſomething towards perpetuating both, and yet it can by no means be concluded, that when any perſon ſuffers more intenſely, he hath therefore ſinned more enormouſly than his fellows.

God ſometimes permits afflictions to come upon us, as a trial of our faith and patience, to give us an opportunity of diſplaying hidden virtues, both for our own advantage, and the edification of others; ſometimes, perhaps, he ſingles us out from the herd of ſinners, to ſet us as a warning, that others, being ſpectators of our ſorrows, may be brought to reflection and repentance, leſt the ſame or worſe evils ſhould fall on them; but nothing from this can be inferred, but that the ſufferer, as a man, is a ſinner, not

that

that he has ſinned more deeply than other men. SERM. XIV.

We are told in the ſecond commandment, that God ſometimes "viſits the "ſins of the Fathers upon the children "even unto the third and fourth gene-"ration;" a man, therefore, in affliction may be doing penance, not for his own iniquities, but for thoſe of his remote anceſtors.

There may indeed be inſtances, where the ſuffering is ſo evidently the effect of the crime, or anſwers ſo exactly to it, that it is impoſſible not to ſee the connexion between them: thus, when the drunkard periſhes by his intemperance, or the libertine by his ſenſuality, their fate may juſtly be looked upon not only as the conſequence, but as the puniſhment, of their vices: thus when dogs licked the blood of Ahab in the ſame place, in which they had before licked that of Naboth, whom Ahab had unjuſtly put to death; or when Adonibezek was the object of the ſame ſpecies of

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cruelty, which he practiſed on ſo many kings; in both theſe caſes the correſpondence between the crimes and the ſufferings was ſo remarkable, that it might, without heſitation, be deemed the work of God. But then it is to be obſerved, here the ſins were *known*, and not *preſumed*; and it was not neceſſary to ſay, 'There men ſuffer 'greatly, and therefore we conclude they 'have ſinned greatly;' *but*, 'we already 'know they have been guilty of great ſins, 'to which their ſufferings have ſo exactly 'anſwered, that we cannot but look on 'them as judgments.' Yet even in ſuch inſtances as theſe, it is more decent to leave it to the afflicted perſon himſelf to draw the concluſion, which, in general, his own conſcience is ready enough to do. "As I have done (ſays Adonibezek) ſo "God hath requited me."

Having thus ſhewn that it is a cuſtom among men to aſcribe ſignal misfortunes to ſignal ſins, and that this cuſtom is very unreaſonable, and in general very unjuſt,

juſt, it may be uſeful to inquire from what cauſe it ariſes; this leads me to the ſecond inſtructive leſſon which the text contains, namely, that we ought to apply the ſufferings of others to ourſelves, and break off our ſins by repentance, leſt we alſo periſh. SERM. XIV.

The conſciouſneſs of ſin, and the dread of the effects of it are ſo extremely burdenſome, that the wicked are in general very deſirous to perſuade themſelves that they are leſs guilty than they really are; and as their conſcience will not permit them to imagine that they are abſolutely innocent, they are very eager to flatter themſelves, that they are comparatively ſo; hence, for the moſt part, ariſes the deſire to diſcover and to aggravate the faults of other men; and as there can be no clearer proof of a man's being enormouſly wicked, than his being declared ſo by heaven, there is a certain eagerneſs to interpret the calamities of our brethren into judgments, and thence to flatter ourſelves, becauſe we have

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eſcaped the like, that we are therefore comparatively virtuous. But this our Saviour tells us is a very falſe concluſion, and a far different conſequence from that which we ought to draw on ſuch occaſions: "Suppoſe ye that theſe Galileans were ſinners "above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things? I tell you, Nay; "but, except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh." Ye are not to imagine that greater temporal ſufferings peculiarly belong to greater ſins; ye are not to conſider them at all in this light; but ye are to take warning by them, and haſten to forſake your own iniquities, leſt the ſame or worſe evils overtake you.

It is very abſurd and unreaſonable to flatter ourſelves with the belief, that becauſe we have eſcaped thoſe afflictions, which we have ſeen fall on others, we are therefore innocent, and free from danger: for, ſuppoſing it true that theſe ſufferers were certainly greater ſinners than we are, we cannot argue from this that we are no ſinners

ners at all; it ought rather to put us on examining ourſelves, on repenting of our iniquities, and reforming our lives, leſt we alſo be involved in ſimilar judgments. But the argument is greatly ſtrengthened, when we reflect on what is probably true, that thoſe who have ſuffered were not more guilty than ourſelves; nay, perhaps, that they were holy and virtuous perſons. This latter ſuppoſition, which we know to be juſt in many inſtances, is a moſt awakening warning to us, to fly from our ſins, for if this has been done to the green tree, what ſhall be done to the dry! If this has been the lot of thoſe whom God loves, what ſhall be the portion of thoſe, whom he hates!—if judgment begin at the houſe of God, where ſhall the ungodly and ſinner appear! SERM. XIV.

No rational perſon, I ſhould think, can hear of the terrible torments, which the firſt martyrs to our religion underwent—holy and good men—who ſpent their whole lives in ſerving God, and endured death in

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its moſt terrible ſhapes rather than forſake him,—no reaſonable perſon can think of this, and not apprehend, that if men of this character, ſuch peculiar favourites of heaven, ſuffered ſo much, how far greater ſufferings muſt be in ſtore for the impenitently wicked! Many grievous ſinners have enjoyed great and uninterrupted proſperity in this world, and many righteous perſons have paſſed their whole lives in tribulation and diſtreſs; but in the world to come the ſcene will be directly reverſed; thoſe who have received their evil things, and have carried themſelves patiently and piouſly, ſhall be comforted; thoſe who have received their good things, and who have been ungrateful and irreligious, ſhall be tormented.

From what has been ſaid then, I ſhould hope that the propriety and wiſdom of this mode of conduct is clear and evident; that when we ſee our brethren in tribulation, it is not for us to aggravate their diſtreſs by imputing it to their iniquities; it does

not at all concern us to pry curiouſly into the matter; but, inſtead of doing this, we are to think of ourſelves, to take warning, to relinquiſh our evil ways, and amend our lives, ſince we have the word of our Saviour, that "unleſs we repent, we ſhall all "likewiſe periſh." SERM. XIV.

SERMON XV.

THE SINS OF MEN NOT CHARGEABLE ON GOD.

JAMES i. 13, 14.

Let no man ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God;—for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed.

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IT happens, I believe not unfrequently, that thoſe who are guilty of any great degrees of wickedneſs, charge their guilt, either immediately or by application, upon God; they either reflect on Providence, for having placed them in ſuch ſituations and circumſtances,

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cumſtances, that to avoid ſin was not in their power,—or, for having given them ſuch violent and headſtrong paſſions, that their reaſon was utterly unable to contend with them. To ſomething, either external or internal, which it depended not on themſelves to order otherwiſe, they would willingly impute their depravity. But this the apoſtle St. James, in the words which I have juſt read, tells us is very unjuſt, inaſmuch as it is very untrue;—"Let no man "ſay, when he is tempted, I am tempted "of God;—for God cannot be tempted "with evil, neither tempteth he any man: "but every man is tempted, when he is "drawn away of his own luſt, and en-"ticed." Think not to excuſe yourſelves, when ye give way to temptations, by attributing your fall to the Almighty; for as God cannot be tempted to commit evil himſelf, ſo neither certainly would he be the inſtrument of exciting it in his creatures; but rather believe, what is evidently the caſe,

caſe, that it is your own evil paſſions and deſires, by which ye are led aſtray. SERM. XV.

Here are two aſſertions—firſt, that God is not, cannot be, the author of our ſins;—ſecondly, that they ariſe from ourſelves.—Let us examine if this be not really the caſe.—That God is not the author of ſin, St. James aſſigns this as a reaſon—it is impoſſible he ſhould be tempted to evil himſelf, and therefore it is not credible he ſhould be the cauſe of it in his creatures.—Both the light of nature and the Scriptures concur in repreſenting the Almighty as a Being of infinite purity; he is the author of all that is right and good—he is, in himſelf, abſolutely perfect—he has neither deſires nor fears, and conſequently cannot be tempted, for the gratification of the one, or, under the influence of the other, to a deviation from the exact line of goodneſs: but he is not only good in himſelf—he is alſo an ardent lover of it in his creatures; or, to expreſs the ſame in other words, he is an hater of all manner of evil—he is of purer

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purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Add to this, that he is conſtantly ſet forth, in the Scriptures, as anxious for the ſalvation of mankind;—"He would not that any ſhould "periſh, but that all ſhould come to re- "pentance; he deſireth not the death of "a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould turn "from his wickedneſs and live." Now let me aſk you—is it likely, or rather, is it not impoſſible, that ſuch a Being as this, infinitely holy himſelf—of purer ſight than to tolerate vice in his creatures—and likewiſe greatly deſirous of the happineſs of all men—ſhould himſelf be the means of enticing them into wickedneſs, which, in its iſſue, unavoidably leadeth to deſtruction?—No—it is not likely—it is impoſſible;—ye cannot but own it. But yet you will ſay, there ſeem to be ſeveral places, in Scripture, in which God is deſcribed (at leaſt ſo it appears to you) as inſtigating or over-ruling men to the perpetration of wicked actions;—to this I reply—conſider all thoſe places carefully, and examine accurately,

curately, who the perſons are, whom you think God is deſcribed as leading to wickedneſs, and you will find that they are not good and virtuous perſons, but perſons already impious and depraved; ſo that God does not tempt them originally from righteouſneſs; but, as a puniſhment for their having already deſerted it, he gives them up to their own depravity. Conſider the caſe of Pharaoh;—the Lord is often ſaid to harden his heart to prevent his permitting the children of Iſrael to depart out of Egypt; but this was not before he had hardened his own heart, and it means therefore not that God infuſed bad qualities into him, but that he gave him up to thoſe he already had, he withdrew from him the ſenſe of his guilt and folly, and left him to himſelf, as a fit recompenſe for his prior obſtinacy. SERM. XV.

By the way, I ſhould obſerve to you, that it is ſometimes tranſlated in our Bible, —" he hardened Pharaoh's heart," when it ſhould be, Pharaoh's heart was hardened, ſo that

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that in thoſe places it is manifeſt it was not God's doing, but his own; but it cannot mean, at any event, that God was actually the cauſe of his guilt.

Again, it is ſaid, with reſpect to thoſe nations of the Canaanites, who were extirpated by the children of Iſrael after their wanderings in the wilderneſs, it is ſaid of them, that it was of the Lord to harden their hearts that they ſhould come againſt Iſrael in battle, that he might deſtroy them utterly; but what is the meaning of this? Surely, that as a puniſhment for their former iniquities, the meaſure of which was now full—iniquities which aroſe not from God, but from themſelves, Providence did juſtly bring them into ſuch circumſtances as proved fatal to them.

In one word, we muſt never explain one or two detached paſſages of Scripture, in ſuch a manner as to make them contradict all the reſt of it; when we are not able to reconcile them, we muſt attribute it to our own defect of underſtanding, which certainly

tainly is its true ſource. The Scriptures every where aſſure us of the infinite holineſs of God; it is impoſſible, therefore, that ſuch a Being ſhould be the author of any thing ſo foul as ſin; and if there be paſſages, which appear at firſt ſight to make him ſo, we muſt diligently examine them, and inſtantly acquieſce and rejoice in any other manner of interpreting them. SERM. XV.

I have mentioned one way, in which God is ſometimes repreſented in the Scriptures as tempting men, which is, when he ſuffers them to fall into circumſtances diſadvantageous to virtue, as a puniſhment for former iniquities; when, becauſe they have already hardened themſelves, he vouchſafes not to afford the influence of his Holy Spirit to ſoften them: but there is yet another way, in which God ſometimes tempts men, and that is, when he brings them or ſuffers them to fall into trials, which he foreſees they will overcome; and thus gives them opportunities of diſplaying their own virtue, and of contributing to his glory; and

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the edification of others. You are before me, I doubt not, in adverting to the caſe of Job; into what ſevere trials of his integrity did he fall! But God certainly would not have permitted this—would not have given up ſo holy a perſonage to the attacks of his malicious enemy, had he not foreſeen that he would ſuſtain them victorious. Now a temptation of this kind does not conduce to ſin but to righteouſneſs; it is intended as a favour to thoſe to whoſe lot it falls; it is proportioned to their ſtrength of reſiſting it; it is ſeldom above what they are able to bear; when it is inſuperable by their own exertions, God affords them an additional meaſure of his grace to aſſiſt them.

Thoſe temptations then, to which men, who have hitherto been deſerving, fall a ſacrifice, never ariſe from God: this was the firſt thing which I was to prove; I come now to the ſecond, that they have their origin in ourſelves;—"Every man is tempted "when he is drawn away of his own luſt, "and enticed." Our ſins are chargeable on ourſelves.

It

It is obſervable, that after the apoſtle has exculpated God from being the author of temptation, he does not impute it to the devil, but to mankind themſelves. That, however, there is ſuch an evil ſpirit, who goes about ſeeking whom he may ſeduce and deſtroy, and who is allowed, to a certain degree, to entice the ſons of men to evil, is, I think, very evident from various parts of holy writ: he entered into Judas to encourage him in the deſign, in which he had engaged, of betraying our Saviour;—he filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghoſt, and to keep back part of the price for which he had ſold his eſtate, when he pretended that he had given in the whole ſum. But here we may remark, that this power is never aſcribed to the devil in ſcripture, but in the caſe of great and horrid ſins, which men had either formerly committed, or of which they were now entertaining deſigns; in both theſe inſtances which I have mentioned, it is ſaid that the ſinner had conceived intentions of his SERM. XV.

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wicked project, before it is ſaid that the devil entered into him to puſh him to the execution of it. And indeed this ſeems to be the caſe, men firſt deſert themſelves, and then God deſerts them; they treacherouſly deſtroy reaſon and conſcience, the two guards which he has given them to protect them from evil, and then he interferes not to prevent the devil from entering into them; that evil ſpirit then takes poſſeſſion, but not before the habitation is ſwept and garniſhed for his reception.

We ourſelves are our greateſt enemies; no ſuch formidable perils await us from any other quarter; God is our friend, and is earneſtly deſirous of our happineſs; nor can the devil approach us without our having firſt laid ourſelves open, and encouraged, in a manner, his attacks.

Let us then fear no dangers from God, but expect all aſſiſtance, if we do but endeavour to deſerve it; neither let us be depreſſed by any apprehenſions of the devil, for, unleſs by our own voluntary weakneſs,

he will not be ſuffered to do us any injury. Let us place our chief guard on ourſelves; let us exert our utmoſt vigilance againſt our own evil paſſions; it is theſe, which being pampered by indulgence, and ſuffered to gain dominion over us by habit, can alone deſtroy us. SERM. XV.

It is in vain that we impute our guilt either to the general depravity of human nature, or to our own particular ſituation; ſuch excuſes will not be ſuffered to avail us. With reſpect to the firſt indeed, allowance will probably be made for it, but then it will be on the ſuppoſition that we have uſed every effort to ſubdue it; and we muſt remember likewiſe, what aid we have been promiſed from heaven to aſſiſt us; if we do not ſucceed, at leaſt in a degree, we may be ſure that we have not done all that was in our power.

With regard to any particular ſituation, and the fancied difficulties, with which our virtue may have to contend, let us recollect that the whole of human life is a ſtate

SERM. XV. of probation; that no temptations have befallen us but ſuch as are common to man; that thoſe trials which we meet with, are ſuch as are allotted us by our Creator, and that it is in combating and ſubduing theſe that our ſpiritual warfare conſiſts. We are not to ſay, if we had been born rich or powerful, if ſuch or ſuch misfortunes had not befallen us, if we had not been entangled in ſuch or ſuch unfavourable circumſtances, we ſhould, in that caſe, have retained our integrity; no—we are to do our duty in that ſtate, in which it has pleaſed God to place us, aſſured that thus alone we can work out our ſalvation.

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SERMON XVI.

SINS OF MEN ARISING FROM A WANT OF THE FEAR OF GOD, AND THE INSTIGATIONS OF THE DEVIL.

PROV. XVI. LATTER PART OF V. 6.

By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil,

THE wickedneſs, which is ſo prevalent amongſt the human race, owes its exiſtence to various cauſes; there are, however, two which have a more general and extenſive influence than the reſt; one of them, more particularly, in a greater or leſs degree, enters into the production of every crime. Theſe two cauſes are, a want of a

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due apprehenſion of the Almighty, and, the inſtigation of the devil. The legiſlature of our country, on account of their great pre-eminence, has ſingled them out as giving riſe to all thoſe enormities, which require the interpoſition of the law: when the culprit ſtands charged with a breach of the public tranquillity, it is ſtated, you know, in the indictment, that he had not the fear of God before his eyes, and was ſeduced by the inſtigation of the devil.

It ſhall be my endeavour in this diſcourſe, to prove that theſe cauſes, and more particularly the firſt, are the only origin, not only of thoſe enormities, which are of that magnitude and notoriety to call for human puniſhment, but of every other deviation from innocence, however ſlight or ſecret.

And firſt, I aſſert, that all guilt ariſes from a want of a due fear of the Almighty; this is the prime and grand cauſe of it. The fear of God is frequently deſcribed in the ſcriptures as wiſdom, as underſtanding,

as

as righteouſneſs, that is, as being productive of all theſe in the perſon with whom it reſides; and, certainly, when it is entertained in that degree, which the majeſty and ſanctity of the object demands, ſuch effects cannot but flow from it. For conſider who God is, and what are his chief qualities; he is the creator and governor of the univerſe, he who ſpake, and it was done,—commanded, and it was made faſt;—he is a Being of infinite power, he is preſent every where, and privy to our moſt ſecret tranſactions. If we had theſe ideas conſtantly before our eyes, is it poſſible that we ſhould ever dare to affront him by our iniquities? He made us, I ſaid; he has therefore a title to govern us, he has a right to our unlimited obedience; he is holineſs itſelf, and therefore of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; he delights in virtue, and he hates vice with the moſt perfect hatred; he has ſtrongly commanded the one, and forbidden the other; and has ſolemnly aſſured us, that he will reward or puniſh us SERM. XVI.

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according as we are guilty or innocent: this, as we cannot doubt his ability, ſo neither can we doubt his will to perform; and as he is every where preſent, a ſpectator of our moſt ſecret actions, we cannot poſſibly form a hope of eſcaping detection. Now if this be the caſe, as it certainly is, is it not evident, when we fall into the commiſſion of any ſin, either that the fear of God is removed from before our eyes, or, which amounts to the ſame, that we do not entertain true notions of him? Is it poſſible, otherwiſe, that the tranſient gratification of a moment, the hope of any riches or honours that this world can afford (which, when acquired, we may be deprived of immediately, and, at the beſt, muſt ſurrender ſo ſoon) could tempt us into wickedneſs? I think it is not poſſible; I think, if we had conſtantly before us an inſpecting and avenging God, the hater and puniſher of all unrighteouſneſs; one who is able to caſt both body and ſoul into hell, and who has ſolemnly denounced that awful

awful menace againſt impenitent ſinners, SERM. XVI.
I think it muſt have an effectual influence on our lives and converſations. But, inſtead of this, we are too apt to thruſt away ideas of this kind, too apt to baniſh them from our hearts, as interrupters and diſturbers of our gaiety, or, what has the ſame effect, to impair and weaken their impreſſion, by encouraging falſe notions of their object.

There is a particular ſcepticiſm in too many, with regard to the attributes of God; they doubt whether he poſſeſſes ſome qualities in that extent, in which Reaſon and Scripture aſſure us that he does; they partly perſuade themſelves that his preſence is not ſo univerſal as it is repreſented, or that he does not condeſcend to regard ſo minutely the concerns of ſuch a creature as man; they flatter themſelves with hopes, beſides, that he will not be ſo rigidly juſt as they have been taught to imagine; infinitely powerful, infinitely good, they are willing to allow him; but they perſuade

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perſuade themſelves, that this latter attribute will reſtrain him in the exerciſe of his juſtice, and reflecting how frail a creature man is, and how apparently great the number of unrepenting ſinners, they would fain believe that they ſhall find ſafety in conſideration of their frailty and their numbers. But if they did not endeavour to deceive themſelves, they could never reaſon in this manner; the omnipreſence of God is a tenet even of natural religion, which is fully confirmed by revelation; nothing is ſo ſecret as to eſcape his inſpection.—"He is about "our path, and about our bed, and ſpieth "out all our ways;" nothing is ſo inconſiderable as to be beneath his regard; it extends even to the hairs of our head, all of which are numbered. Neither let us buoy ourſelves up, and impair the influence which the fear of God would otherwiſe have by imputing our iniquities to our natural frailty, when we recollect what aids we are promiſed, and by what inducements we are incited to overcome it. An all-powerful

Being

Being will aſſiſt us, and therefore we cannot fail, if our endeavours are ſincere, of being victorious, and eternal glory and happineſs will be the reward of our conqueſt: all pleas of difficulty and inability vaniſh before theſe conſiderations. But God is good, you have ſaid, infinitely good, and, therefore, will never doom to endleſs deſtruction ſuch a multitude of apparently impenitent ſinners as we ſee around us. Do not rely upon this; you are a very improper judge of the extent of your neighbour's guilt; it may be attended with extenuating circumſtances, which you, who reaſon in this manner, well know is not the caſe with your own; he may be in a ſtate of ſalvation, however it may appear otherwiſe to you; think not, therefore, to find ſafety in ſaying, 'I ſee all around me as bad as myſelf,' ſince you are very probably deceived, and if you are not, it is the height of abſurdity to ſuppoſe that the vicious will find protection in their numbers. SERM. XVI.

The

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The motives to the fear of God are ſo ſtrong, that it is, I think, manifeſt that (unleſs they drive it aſſiduouſly from their minds, or impair its influence by falſe reaſoning on the object of it) men could not be ſo frequently betrayed into the commiſſion of groſs wickedneſs: but when this is once done, another cauſe of vice begins to operate,—the inſtigation of the devil! When that impregnable ſhield, a due apprehenſion of the Almighty, is removed, we become naked and expoſed to the fiery darts of our wicked adverſary.

The want of the fear of God is the prime cauſe of unrighteouſneſs, the other is only ſubordinate; God ſuffers us not to be tempted above what we are able to reſiſt, till we have caſt off our veneration for him; he does not deſert us, until we have firſt deſerted ourſelves; great as the envy and malice of our enemy are, he dares not moleſt us while he ſees us ſubordinate to the authority, and protected by the ſuperintendance of an Almighty leader; it is no wonder that he then

then commences his attacks as ſoon as he perceives us defenceleſs. SERM. XVI.

This grand deceiver may perhaps have it in his power to influence our conduct two ways; he may either lead us into temptation by bringing us into ſituations unfavourable to our virtue; or he may repreſent things in falſe and deceitful colours: the Scriptures give an account of both; it deſcribes the devil as the author of all thoſe misfortunes which fell on Job, with the expreſs deſign of tempting him to forſake his integrity; and it tells us that he entered into the heart of Judas to engage him to betray our Saviour, and of Ananias and Sapphira, to incite them to lie to the Holy Ghoſt; to thoſe who encourage in their hearts ſenſual ideas, he may adminiſter occaſions of carrying their favourite paſſions into action; the covetous he may miſlead with the opportunity of gain, the ambitious with the proſpect of honours and of power; he may be permitted to facilitate and forward their acceſs to the darling object of their

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their affection, that they may more eaſily deſtroy themſelves in making the fatal acquiſition. Or, if we ſhould not allow that he is able to take ſo active a part in the external affairs of men in general, his influence on their internal feelings cannot, I think, be doubted; perhaps he has it in his power, if not originally to put in motion our evil paſſions, at leaſt to adminiſter fuel to them, when we have willingly permitted them to aſſail us; perhaps he is able to indiſpoſe us, to render us ſlothful and inactive towards any exertions of virtue and benevolence, or perhaps he has a certain influence on our reaſon, can make it ſee objects in falſe colours, and thus render it inadequate to the office of directing our conduct with that ſafety for which it was beſtowed on us by God. I ſhould ſuppoſe that by each of theſe ways our ſubtle and powerful enemy enſnares and deſtroys us; but of theſe, the laſt is the moſt dangerous, and conſequently that againſt which we ſhould be moſt on our guard.—It is probable that the devil is

at

at the bottom of thoſe falſe ideas which many men entertain of the attributes of God; that, when we are about to fall into any crime, from which perhaps a thorough conviction of the preſence and obſervation of the Almighty, and of his ſtrict juſtice, would reſtrain us, the adverſary of our ſouls inſtills into us doubts and heſitations, makes us parley and deliberate, repreſents to us the infinite greatneſs of God, and that, removed as he is ſo far above us, and wrapt up in his tranſcendent majeſty, it is not likely he ſhould attend to the concerns of ſo inſignificant a being as man; or, if this be too ſtale an argument, he cauſes us to reaſon on his goodneſs and mercy, and tries to perſuade us that he will not be ſo extreme to mark what is done amiſs, as the Scriptures deſcribe him. If by reaſoning of this kind, he be able to argue a ſinner out of his fear of divine puniſhment, he has other fallacies ready to bring forward to diminiſh his dread of the puniſhments of men; in the firſt place, if the nature of the crime will at all bear SERM. XVI.

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bear it, he flatters the hesitating sinner with the hope or the certainty of escaping detection; but if this be impossible, he persuades him that his being discovered will be attended with no ill consequences — that, though known to be a culprit, he shall yet, by some circumstance, escape the vengeance of the law. If the crime be not of so deep a die, or one which does not so materially affect the peace of society—if it be one from the commission of which the credit and character chiefly are endangered, our enemy points out the number of those who have been guilty, with impunity—bids us mark how they are still caressed and respected by their fellow-creatures, and insinuates that perhaps some of them have found the means of alluring this kindness by their very crimes.

Fraud and rapine are frequently the steps to wealth; and wealth, no matter how obtained, rarely fails to procure to its possessor deference and respect; but let it be remembered, that this is only in appearance: in appearance,

pearance, I muſt admit that it does too often happen, but never in reality;—thoſe who bow loweſt to the grandeur of the proſperous villain cannot really honour him; but, though mean enough to pay outward homage to his poſſeſſions, they, in their hearts (ſordid wretches as they are) deſpiſe and deteſt the man. SERM. XVI.

I will diſmiſs the ſubject, by obſerving, that the inſtances of ſucceſsful wickedneſs are ſingle, while in the common and uſual courſe of worldly affairs it meets with its deſerved puniſhment; here and there, a particular villain may be pointed out, who has eſcaped the puniſhment of the laws and the open contempt and deteſtation of his fellows, while there are numbers who are yearly falling ſacrifices to public juſtice, and multitudes of leſs atrocious criminals, who are overwhelmed with juſtly merited infamy.

All the other arguments which the devil may bring forward to perſuade us, when he is tempting us to ſin, of the impunity of it with reſpect to our perſons, fortunes, and

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characters, might be eaſily refuted, if we reaſoned with unbiaſſed minds; but, while our paſſions are engaged on his ſide, he ſeldom fails to ſubdue us.

Let us then, whenever we find ourſelves tempted to do what our conſcience ſuggeſts to be wrong, be aware that we are not then in a proper ſtate to argue on the innocence or guilt of it—let us ſtay till a cooler moment—and, even then, let us recollect how much the devil is intereſted to deceive us;—let us be upon our guard againſt his wiles;—and let us, in addition, call in to our aid the fear of God—and ſo we ſhall be fully able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked one.

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SERMON XVII.

DELAY OF PUNISHMENT THE CAUSE OF SIN.

ECCLESIASTES viii. 11.

Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil.

WHEN the puniſhments which are denounced againſt impiety and vice are ſo alarmingly dreadful, it ſeems hard to conceive that any men ſhould be found ſo inattentive to their own intereſt, as to venture to provoke them. The text informs us whence this ariſes; it tells us that this temerity and madneſs is owing to the

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delay of juſtice, it is becauſe the exaction of the penalty does not immediately follow the commiſſion of the crime, but that ſome uncertain ſpace intervenes.—"Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed "*ſpeedily*, therefore the heart of the ſons of "men is fully ſet in them to do evil."

It is the purpoſe of this diſcourſe to ſet before you ſome of the concluſions that men draw from this delay of puniſhment, by which they encourage and harden themſelves in their ſins, and to ſhew the falſity of ſuch concluſions—their folly and ingratitude.

And firſt,—there are ſaid to be ſome, who, on ſeeing the ſinner uninterrupted in his wickedneſs for a long time, conclude that there is no God, or, if there be one, that he takes no notice of what is doing upon earth; but as I am addreſſing a Chriſtian congregation, I need not ſet myſelf to anſwer this argument. *You* all allow that there is a God, and that he is an exact obſerver of human affairs.

A ſecond

A ſecond argument, by which ſome, who may have a ſmall ſenſe of religion in them, deceive themſelves, is this; they think that, becauſe ſin goes unpuniſhed for the preſent, it is not therefore ſo great an evil, nor ſo entirely offenſive and provoking to God, as it is repreſented. But how abſurd and ungrateful is this! Becauſe God does not take immediate vengeance on us, when we diſobey his commands, we therefore venture to ſet them at nought, and perſuade ourſelves that this diſobedience is a matter of no importance. All kinds of ſin, we allow, are ſtrictly forbidden in our Bible, and heavy penalties denounced againſt them; but becauſe theſe penalties do not inſtantly follow, we therefore fooliſhly doubt whether they will be exacted at all; becauſe we experience the greatneſs of God's mercy in affording us time for repentance, we therefore preſumptuouſly conclude againſt his juſtice and veracity. He hath ſolemnly ſworn that the ſinner who continues impenitent, and dies in his ſins, ſhall not enter SERM. XVII.

SERM. XVII. into his reſt; and do we impiouſly imagine, becauſe the execution of this tremendous threat is deferred for a ſhort time, that the oath of the God of truth ſhall fail?—Can an impunity of thirty or forty years lead us to ſuch an abſurd concluſion as this?—of thirty or forty years which are but as a grain of ſand in compariſon with the ſea ſhore, but as a ſingle moment in reſpect to eternity!—But ſtill farther,—during this preſent life we are upon our trial, and till that is ended, it would ſcarce ſeem equitable that ſentence ſhould be paſſed; nor was it ever intended by God to diſtribute exact juſtice in this world.

You remember the parable of the tares mixed with the wheat: the ſervants of the houſeholder are in haſte to root out and deſtroy them; but he interpoſes and prevents it:—"Let them (ſays he) both grow together until the harveſt, and in the time "of harveſt I will ſay to the reapers, Gather "ye together, firſt the tares, and bind them "into

" into bundles to burn them; but gather SERM.
" the wheat into my barn." XVII.

Our Saviour, at the requeſt of his diſciples, explained to them this parable; he told them that the field was the world—the wheat, the children of the kingdom, i. e. good people; the tares, the children of the wicked one, i. e. bad people: that this wicked one, who ſowed them, was the devil; that the harveſt was the end of the world, and the reapers the angels:—" As " therefore (added he) the tares are ga- " thered together and burned in the fire, " ſo ſhall it be in the end of the world.— " The Son of man ſhall ſend forth his " angels, and they ſhall gather out of his " kingdom all things that offend, and them " which do iniquity, and ſhall caſt them " into a furnace of fire: there ſhall be " wailing and gnaſhing of teeth. Then " ſhall the righteous ſhine forth as the ſun " in the kingdom of their Father."

You ſee our Saviour himſelf tells us, that judgment will not take place againſt

SERM. XVII. ſinners till the end of the world; we have therefore no reaſon to be ſurprized at their preſent impunity, nor can we at all argue from it, that ſin is no evil, or that it is not diſpleaſing to God, or that he will not take ſevere vengeance on thoſe who commit it. The truth is, we have much ground to apprehend, that the longer the puniſhment of the wicked is delayed, the more heavy and dreadful it will be, when it does fall on them! God ſpares them for the preſent; he permits them to fill up the meaſure of their ſins, but in the mean time *he* fills up the vials of his wrath; he ſhews forth his mercy in this world, but in the next he will ſhew forth his juſtice; now he reſtrains his anger, and permits the unrighteous to triumph in their ſafety, but the time will come when he will make amends for this apparent indifference—when he will vindicate his inſulted majeſty in the ſight of men and angels.—Go on then thou, who preſumeſt on the long-ſuffering of God, yield to every evil temptation, follow the

bent of every corrupt paſſion, walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes; but know thou, that in the mean time thou art treaſuring up to thyſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. SERM. XVII.

Or take the matter in another light, and ſuppoſe (what is alſo true) that the Almighty means by this delay of ſentence, to give the ſinner time and encouragement to repent of his wickedneſs, and reform his life; what an ungrateful turn is it to give to this goodneſs, to conclude from it, that the diſobedience of God's commands is a matter of no conſequence, and that it is not greatly offenſive to him, but that, becauſe he graciouſly ſuſpends, he will therefore never inflict puniſhment.

Far differeut is the reaſoning which a generous mind would ſuggeſt; 'O God '(it would prompt us to ſay) O gracious 'God, who deſireſt not the death of a ſin-'ner, but rather that he ſhould turn from 'his wickedneſs and live; bleſſed be thy 'holy

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'holy name, that thou haſt afforded us 'time for recollection and repentance: 'what muſt have been our condition if 'thou hadſt cut us off in our ſins! Pre-'vent us from abuſing thy patience, and 'enable us to take advantage of thy long-'ſuffering; through thy mercy the gate of 'life is ſtill open to us, Oh! grant us grace 'to enter, ere it cloſe againſt us, and ex-'clude us for ever!'

But after all, God, even in this world, has not left us without proofs of the evil nature of ſin, and of his perfect hatred of it; witneſs the diſturbed reflections and alarming anticipations of the wicked, that hell, which is already begun in the guilty boſom—a guilty conſcience;—witneſs that flood of waters which overwhelmed the whole earth, and deſtroyed all fleſh for their corruption and violence;—witneſs the deſtruction of thoſe iniquitous cities Sodom and Gomorrah, by that terrible ſhower of fire and brimſtone;—witneſs the inſtantaneous death of Ananias and Sapphira for their falſehood and hypocriſy;

criſy;—witneſs theſe and a multitude of other inſtances, which hiſtory has handed down to us, of the preſent puniſhment of iniquity, both in particular perſons, and alſo of whole nations:—ſo that God has not left us even here without ſufficient warning of the evil of ſin, and of its dangerous and deſtructive tendency. SERM. XVII.

A third ſet of perſons, who ſuffer themſelves to be betrayed into ruin by this delay of ſentence, are thoſe, who, acknowledging the heinous nature of ſin, and the danger to which it expoſes them, do yet continue in their wickedneſs, becauſe they think that they ſhall have abundance of time, before they die, for repentance. But this is ſo great a hazard in all reſpects, that there is no venturing upon it. In the firſt place, they cannot be *certain* that time will be allowed them: they may be cut off in a moment, and in the grave there is nothing to be done in religion,—as the tree falls, ſo it lies: or if that portion of life, with which they flatter themſelves, ſhould be

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be granted, the probability is that they will be more unwilling to forſake their ſins at ſome future time, than they are at preſent. What was begun by paſſion may be confirmed by habit, and from having his mercy ſo long deſpiſed, God may be tempted entirely to withdraw from them his holy ſpirit, without which they will be altogether unequal to any good work. It is owing to God that they are alive at this moment; let them then take thoſe meaſures which alone can determine whether, with reſpect to them, his long-ſuffering be a mercy: let them this inſtant make their peace with him, leſt his patience be wearied out, and no farther opportunity be allowed them.

I ſhall mention only one more unhappy conſequence which ſinners draw from this delay of puniſhment, and that is, that though certain, it is yet diſtant, and ſo diſtant, that they cannot think of it with any great degree of concern. This is a ſtrange, and yet, I fear, no very uncommon conſolation.

If

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If a future judgment muſt come, if we muſt one day give an account of all our thoughts, words and actions, and (according as we have done well or ill) be rewarded with everlaſting happineſs, or doomed to everlaſting miſery,—it diminiſhes very little the weight of this tremendous truth—that this judgment and theſe puniſhments will not take place till ſome remote period;—how great they will be, and how long they will laſt is the only important conſideration;—and when we hear that they will be in degree above our moſt alarming conceptions, and that to their duration there will be no end, we ought ſurely to count it nothing, even if a long time were *certainly* to elapſe before they began.

But, we may be miſtaken, even in this point; judgment may be nearer to us than we imagine; we may be called to render up our accounts much ſooner than we expect: and when we vainly flatter ourſelves with many more years of eaſe and luxury, when every thing appears to ſmile upon us, the

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the decree may then be ſealed, and the commandment come forth to ſummon us to our laſt audit. Death is conſtantly hanging over us—and, immediately on death, follows judgment!—for whether we are inſtantly brought to trial, at our departure from this world, or whether we lay inſenſible in the grave till the conſummation of all things, makes no difference—the intervening time will appear but as a ſingle moment. There is indeed a third opinion, which is—that the ſoul will exiſt and retain all its faculties, apart from the body, from the deceaſe of the man till the end of the world;—but, if it be ſo, how dreadful muſt be the reflections and terrors with which the ſoul of the ſinner will be oppreſſed, who foreſees its own inevitable doom, and yet knows it to be impoſſible to do any thing to avert it! So that whether ſentence on each particular perſon follows inſtantly on his death, or whether we lie inſenſible in the grave till the general judgment, or whether the ſoul lives ſeparate from

from the body, ſeems matter of little importance; in the two former caſes, it appears to me to be juſt the ſame; and, in the latter, I ſee not that it can afford any juſt grounds of conſolation to the wicked. SERM. XVII.

From what has been ſaid, I truſt that the folly and ingratitude of being bold in our ſins, becauſe the puniſhment of them is not inflicted immediately, will be ſufficiently evident:—would to God that we may all, not only at this preſent moment, perceive it, but that it may ſink deep into our hearts, and influence our future conduct!

Let us ever remember how inſignificant this life is, in compariſon with eternity! Paſs but a few ſhort years, and all thoſe who now crowd the ſcene, will be mouldering in their graves!—even the very memory of them (ſave of ſome diſtinguiſhed few) ſhall be no more!—but their works will follow even the *moſt obſcure*;—their merits will one day be drawn from their dread abode, and proclaimed and recompenſed in the face of the univerſe! then will God's perfect

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perfect hatred of ſin, and his veracity and juſtice, be conſpicuous! then will the ſinner, who diſtruſted the execution of his threats, or made light of them becauſe of their diſtance, be terribly convinced of his error; while the righteous man, who, by patient continuance in well doing, ſhewed his faith in his promiſes, ſhall receive rewards infinitely ſurpaſſing his moſt ſanguine hopes and conceptions.

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SERMON XVIII.

AGAINST MALICE AND RESENTMENT.

ROMANS xii. FORMER PART OF V. 17.

Recompence to no man evil for evil.

THERE is no virtue which is more frequently and ſtrongly inculcated in the goſpel, than the forgiveneſs of thoſe who have injured us. Good will towards his enemies is an indiſpenſable requiſite in the formation of the character of a Chriſtian; it is the condition on which alone his own faults can be pardoned, and his imperfect obedience meet with acceptance. The truth of this aſſertion is ſo glaring, that it is ſcarce poſſible to read a page of the New Teſta-

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ment, without being convinced of it; yet has it happened from various cauſes that there is no law of our religion, which is more openly or more frequently violated. The greatneſs of the provocation—the want of duty, or proper reſpect, in the perſon who has offended us—his ingratitude—the dread leſt he ſhould triumph in our forbearance, and be encouraged to new inſults—the apprehenſion of the ſcorn and contempt of the world, are all alleged as excuſes for reſentment and retaliation: paſſion and pride are, in this inſtance, combined againſt virtue: the one is raiſed inſtantly, and prompts us to inflict pain on the perſon from whom we have received it; the other operates more leiſurely, but, unhappily, with greater effect; it forbids us to forgive, though we are no longer enraged; it commands us to revenge, though we wiſh for reconciliation.

Among the many errors in the opinions of mankind, there is none which is productive of more unhappineſs, and perhaps of

of more guilt, than that which has annexed the idea of meanneſs and cowardice to a quiet ſubmiſſion to an injury; the party offended ſcarce, perhaps, on ſome occaſions, feels the offence, on others he would be willing to overlook it, but the eye of the world is upon him, he fancies that he is expected to exert himſelf, and is revengeful from regard to his reputation. SERM. XVIII.

From the weakneſs of human nature, from the various competitions of men, from all deſiring to obtain that which can only be the property of a few, it muſt neceſſarily happen, that offences will often be given, injuries frequently be done; no command therefore could be more worthy of him, at whoſe birth peace was proclaimed upon earth, than to forgive: forgiveneſs puts a ſudden ſtop to the moſt material conſequences of an injury, it prevents it from extending beyond its natural effects, it compoſes the mind of him who is aggrieved, and probably reduces the repentance of the aggreſſor. Whereas, if the perſon offended

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were at liberty to avenge the offence, if he were free to return what he had ſuffered, himſelf the judge, it is ſcarcely poſſible that he ſhould ſo meaſure his revenge, as not to exceed the pain he had received; his adverſary, at leaſt, will never allow the juſtice of his puniſhment; the ſame malicious or overbearing temper, which excited the firſt injury, will put him on juſtifying it; *he*, in his turn, will have recourſe to retaliation, and a continued ſeries of hoſtilities will be the conſequence. Into what a ſtate then would ſociety be reduced! at home the gnawings of malice, the gloom of hatred, and ſullen meditations on revenge; abroad, ſecret calumnies, open reproaches, violence, and, not unfrequently, bloodſhed.

Every conſideration of juſtice and equity is on the ſide of forgiveneſs: there is no man but who muſt be conſcious of his own frailty, and of the need in which himſelf ſtands of remiſſion of offences: ſometimes, perhaps, he has been injurious to his fellow-creature, and certainly often rebellious againſt

againſt his Creator; let him then exert an indulgence, which he expects—let him forgive, as he hopes to be forgiven. Why ſhould he look, in his own caſe, for the allowance which he is not willing to grant in the caſe of others? How dare he preſume that his own frailties will be paſſed by, while himſelf is extreme to mark what is done amiſs? It is in vain that he alleges greatneſs of provocation, or height of ingratitude; he is not the proper judge; whilſt he is under the dominion of his reſentment, he ought to ſuſpect that it is not probable he ſhould be juſt; he may feel more, perhaps, of the injury than was intended; his ſelf-love may repreſent it to him in aggravated colours; what was poſſibly merely the effect of miſtake or negligence, he may attribute to deſign; he is encompaſſed indeed on every ſide with error, which he can only hope to eſcape by ſubduing his reſentment. SERM. XVIII.

But, grant that you have been indeed provokingly treated and heinouſly wronged,

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are you to give up the government of your temper, and to yield yourſelf a prey to the torments of rage, becauſe your enemy has been unjuſt? are you to endanger your eternal ſalvation, becauſe your friend has been ungrateful? Alas! this is to revenge the faults of others on yourſelf; it is to ſwell the bulk, and increaſe the acrimony of their offences; it is to confer on them a fatal importance, which they could receive from none but yourſelf. The utmoſt that the malice of man can do affects only the body—extends not beyond this world; it is ourſelves alone that can caſt both body and ſoul into hell.

You remember the treatment of the ſervant in the parable, who, after having received from his lord a generous forgiveneſs of a large debt, went and uſed the utmoſt ſeverity againſt one of his fellow-ſervants, who owed him a ſmall debt.—"O thou "wicked ſervant (ſaid his lord) I forgave "thee that debt becauſe thou deſiredſt me: "ſhouldeſt not thou alſo have had com-

"paſſion

" paſſion on thy fellow-ſervant, even as I SERM.
" had pity on thee? And the lord was XVIII.
" wroth, and delivered him to the tor-
" mentors, till he ſhould pay all that was
" due unto him." Preciſely in the ſame caſe ſtands the unmerciful, unforgiving man. If God were extreme to mark what is done amiſs, which of us ſhould live another day, to be offended or to offend? He created us, he preſerves us, and he redeemed us; yet we are conſtantly injuring —perpetually provoking him. Of what ingratitude towards us can our earthly brother be guilty, in compariſon of what we are guilty towards our heavenly Father!

Let us beware, then, leſt by our own rigours we create a precedent againſt ourſelves. " With what judgment we judge,
" we ſhall be judged; with what meaſure
" we mete, it ſhall be meaſured to us
" again." When we are inclined to be unforgiving, let us remember the menace to which we expoſe ourſelves: after our Saviour had related to his diſciples the

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ſeverity which was exerciſed againſt the unmerciful ſervant, he immediately added—"So likewiſe ſhall your heavenly Father "do unto you, if ye from your hearts "forgive not every one his brother their "treſpaſſes."

If example have any ſway with us, all that there is of great or good in the univerſe is on the ſide of mercy and forgiveneſs. Though his majeſty be ſo daringly violated, though his commands be ſo rebelliouſly diſobeyed, though we are continually provoking him by our inſults and iniquities, yet is the Great Governor of heaven and earth ſlow to anger, and eager to forgive; time, warning, aſſiſtance to repent and regain his favour, are all amply beſtowed on ungrateful man. "God de-"ſireth not the death of a ſinner, but "rather that he ſhould turn from his "wickedneſs and live." Hoſtile as he is to every ſpecies of iniquity, and boundleſs as is his power to puniſh it, his favourite title is—the Father of Mercies. If we look

look to the conduct of the Son of God, the virtue of forgiveneſs is alſo eminently conſpicuous; his whole life indeed was one continued inſtance of it:—in return for reproaches he beſtowed inſtruction; in return for perſonal inſults he put up petitions for the inſulter; in return for death he gave redemption:—"When he was re-"viled, he reviled not again; when he "ſuffered, he threatened not." Nor did his amiable diſpoſition forſake him when in his dying agonies—his laſt prayer was for his murderers—"Father, forgive them, "for they know not what they do." The ſame virtue has alſo in general made a part of the character of thoſe illuſtrious perſons, whom hiſtory hath handed down to us as moſt worthy of her encomiums; clemency and reconcileableneſs have added a luſtre to all their other virtues. SERM. XVIII.

Since there are ſo many motives to forgiveneſs,—ſince our quiet in this world, and our happineſs in the next, depend upon

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upon it,—ſince it is recommended to us by the example of holy and illuſtrious men, of our Saviour Chriſt, and of God himſelf,—it ſeems extraordinary that any ſhould be found, who will give a place in their breaſts to thoſe bad paſſions, reſentment and revenge: the truth is, that however inclined to forgive, they puſillanimouſly ſuffer themſelves to be deterred from it from a fear of being deſpiſed by the world, from a dread of ſinking in the opinion of their fellow-mortals, of beings, whoſe ſuperiority they are under no obligation to acknowledge, and who, when courted with the utmoſt attention, can confer no valuable or laſting reward; of beings, who ignorantly judge what they have never examined, or partially determine what they do not underſtand. He that can deſcend to ſue for the favour of ſuch frail creatures at the price of his innocence, who can ſuffer their praiſes to induce him to diſobey the Great Governor of the world, has little reaſon to be

be proud of the greatneſs of his mind, and must ſurely, when he awakens to reflection, become deſpicable in his own eyes, and ſhrink with ſhame at the remembrance of his folly and cowardice. SERM. XVIII.

The utmoſt perfection, to which humanity can arrive, is a conſtant and determinate purſuit of virtue, without any regard to preſent danger or advantage. Let us not then turn to the right hand or to the left, either ſwayed by the applauſes, or terrified by the cenſures of the world; but let us go ſtraight on in that path, which the author of our religion has marked out, and which our own conſcience will tell us leads to life and happineſs: let no falſe opinion of dignity or honour deter us from mercy and forgiveneſs, and invite us to reſentment. Of him who hopes to be forgiven, it is indiſpenſably neceſſary that he forgive; no motive then ought to have the leaſt weight when put in competition with this. On this virtue of forgiveneſs eternity is ſuſpended, and to him who refuſes

SERM. XVIII. fuſes to practiſe it, the throne of mercy is inacceſſible, and the Saviour of the world has been born in vain.

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. PART OF V. 10.

I laboured more abundantly than they all.

THIS day is appointed by our church to be kept ſacred in memory of the converſion of St. Paul. Whether we conſider the extraordinary circumſtances which produced this converſion, or whether we look to the advantage which the Gentile world, and we, among others, have received from it,—in either view, both reaſon and gratitude demand that it ſhould be had in everlaſting remembrance. SERM. XIX.

I pro-

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I propoſe in this diſcourſe to enter conciſely into the hiſtory and character of this illuſtrious apoſtle, and to ſhew the argument which his converſion affords in favour of the truth of Chriſtianity, and, laſtly, to lay down ſome rules for your practice, which the facts deſcribed may ſuggeſt.

By the converſion of St. Paul is meant, his quitting the Jewiſh, and embracing the Chriſtian religion. St. Paul was born at Tarſus, of Jewiſh parents; their circumſtances were probably opulent, though they brought up their ſon to the trade of tent-making; for it was uſual with the Jews, whatever fortune they were able to give their children, to have them inſtructed in ſome trade, both to keep them from idleneſs, and that they might have ſome reſource, if their circumſtances ſhould ever require it.

Having received the rudiments of his education at his native place, he was ſent, at a certain time, to complete it at Jeruſalem, and was placed under the care of Gamaliel,

the moſt eminent Jewiſh teacher of his time. SERM. Here St. Paul made a great proficiency, XIX. "and became expert in all the cuſtoms "and queſtions which are among the Jews." The ſect of which he made choice was that of the Phariſees, the moſt ſtrict of all others, and being of a warm temper, he became exceedingly zealous for the Jewiſh religion.

This was not long after the death of Chriſt, but yet his followers had greatly increaſed in numbers; and as they did not ſcruple to aſſert, that the religion which they taught was to be erected on the ruins of Judaiſm, they gave very ſerious alarms to the Jews. Among others, St. Paul, believing the whole to be an impoſture, and verily thinking (as he ſays) that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus of Nazareth, became extremely irritated againſt the Chriſtians, he gave his voice againſt them, puniſhed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſpheme; and when the firſt martyr, Stephen,

was

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was executed, St. Paul was conſenting to his death, and ſtood by and took care of the clothes of thoſe who ſtoned him.

It was ſoon after this, that, not contented with what he had done at Jeruſalem, he went to the chief prieſt, and ſolicited from him letters to the ſynagogues of Damaſcus, which might authorize him to take and impriſon all thoſe whom he found adhering to the name of Chriſt. But as he was in the midſt of his journey, full of his unjuſt purpoſe, about noon, a light from heaven, above the brightneſs of the ſun, ſhone round about him, and thoſe who were with him; and when they were all fallen to the earth, St. Paul heard a voice ſpeaking to him in the Hebrew tongue, and ſaying — "Saul, "Saul, why perſecuteſt thou me? it is "hard for thee to kick againſt the pricks;" and he ſaid, "Who art thou, Lord?" And the voice anſwered—"I am Jeſus, whom "thou perſecuteſt. But riſe, and ſtand "upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto "thee for this purpoſe, to make thee a

" miniſter and a witneſs, both of theſe SERM.
" things which thou haſt ſeen, and of thoſe XIX.
" in the which I will appear unto thee;
" delivering thee from the people and from
" the Gentiles, unto whom I now ſend
" thee; to open their eyes, and to turn
" them from darkneſs to light, and from
" the power of Satan unto God, that they
" may receive forgiveneſs of ſins, and in-
" heritance among them which are ſancti-
" fied by faith, that is in me." And when Paul aroſe, he was blind, and thoſe who were with him took him by the hand, and brought him to Damaſcus; and he continued blind for three days, and neither did eat nor drink. But after three days were paſt, he was viſited, by the command of God, by a devout Chriſtian called Ananias, and at his word received his ſight. Immediately from that time he became obedient to the heavenly viſion, and was as remarkably active and zealous in ſupporting and propagating Chriſtianity, as he had formerly been in oppoſing and perſecuting

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it. His whole life was ſpent in labours and travels for this divine purpoſe; difficulties, dangers, ſufferings of every kind, he voluntarily and joyfully encountered for this end; and he finally laid down his life in the ſame glorious cauſe.

Such are the outlines of the hiſtory of this illuſtrious apoſtle; it forms one among many invincible proofs of the truth of our religion. Here is a man ſtrongly attached to a particular cauſe, with all the prejudices of birth and education in its favour; in the ſame proportion alſo he is adverſe to another cauſe, which he looks on as entirely oppoſite to his own; he has openly ſhewn both his friendſhip and his enmity, nay, he has gone ſo far as to ſolicit a public commiſſion, by which he might be able more effectually to gratify them. Yet in the midſt of all his zeal, we behold him ſuddenly changing his ſentiments, and labouring and preaching in favour of that very religion, which he had ſet out, determined to overthrow.

Now

Now to what can we attribute this, but to the ſtrongeſt conviction of his former miſtaken notions, and of the juſtice of thoſe which he had now adopted. He could poſſibly have no other motive for doing what he did, but the ſtrongeſt perſuaſion that it was right. He could not hope either to gain riches or honour by this change; on the contrary, he was certain to forfeit both; the party which he left were in the poſſeſſion of all worldly goods, the party he embraced were entirely deſtitute;—from the former he could expect nothing but abuſe, enmity, and perſecution (which we find he conſtantly experienced) — from the latter, who were poor and weak, and whoſe numbers were comparatively very ſmall, he could neither look for ſupport nor protection. He could not change his religion with a view of becoming great and powerful in that party to whom he betook himſelf; for we do not find him ever aſſerting any ſuperiority over them, or pretending to any thing more than independence; on the contrary, SERM. XIX.

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he conſtantly acknowledges how blameable he had formerly been in afflicting the Chriſtians, and names himſelf, on that account, leſs than the leaſt of the apoſtles; beſides, eminence in this new ſect was certainly not an object of ambition to a reaſonable man, who was not thoroughly convinced of the truth of their opinions; for, in ſo poor and deſpiſed a ſociety, it could confer no worldly advantages, but only expoſed thoſe who might attain it, to more ſevere and inevitable perſecution.

It is clear then, that no other adequate motive can be aſſigned for St. Paul's converſion, but his being perſuaded of its juſtice; — the concluſion therefore is, that he firmly believed the Chriſtian religion, which he embraced, to be ſent from God. But perhaps an enemy to our faith might ſay— that St. Paul was deceived, that the whole was a trick put upon him, and contrived by the Chriſtians to gain over to their party ſo active an adverſary;—but I will be bold to ſay, that the circumſtances of the caſe were

ſuch

ſuch as to render this abſolutely impoſſible. SERM. XIX.
A company of men travelling along the high road at noon-day, are all of a ſudden ſtruck to the ground by a great light, exceeding the brightneſs of the ſun—they all ſee the light and hear a voice—but only one of them, St. Paul, diſtinctly underſtands what is ſaid; upon their ariſing from the ground, St. Paul is found to be totally blind, and thoſe who are with him are obliged to take him by the hand and lead him to the city, whither they are going; he continues blind for three days, till his ſight is wonderfully reſtored at the word of a devout perſon, of whoſe coming and doing him this benevolent office he is before apprized in a viſion; he is likewiſe informed, by the ſame perſon, that he is a choſen inſtrument to preach the religion of Chriſt, throughout the world. Now in all this, there could poſſibly be no deception;—therefore St. Paul became a Chriſtian on juſt and ſure grounds—and the Chriſtian religion is true.

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The leſſons for our own practice, which might be drawn from the character and hiſtory of St. Paul, are various; I ſhall content myſelf with pointing out, on the preſent occaſion, one which the words of the text particularly ſuggeſt.—"I laboured "more abundantly than they all." The natural warmth of St. Paul's temper might poſſibly have its part in promoting this extraordinary diligence; but it was, doubtleſs, much increaſed by the remembrance of the hoſtilities which he had formerly exerciſed againſt the Chriſtian cauſe. In like manner it behoves every one, who, either from error or depravity, has been guilty of ſins, when he once turns away from his wickedneſs, to exert himſelf in the moſt ſtrenuous manner in attaining the greateſt heights of virtue.

This is peculiarly neceſſary in the penitent, whether he conſiders the propriety of making atonement for paſt miſcarriages, or whether he would guard againſt the danger of a relapſe, to which a mediocrity of zeal

would expoſe him. It is clearly requiſite, SERM. XIX.
according to every rule of juſtice, that
they who have affronted God, by their impieties, in the former part of their lives, ſhould make him all the amends in their power by exceſs of adoration and obedience in the latter; and that they who have injured mankind by their vices, or debauched them by their ill example, when young, ſhould exert every effort to benefit them by their virtues, and reform them by the moſt ſcrupulous and unremitting righteouſneſs, when old.

This is ſo ſtriking a truth, that we generally find thoſe who truly repent, ſhewing their conviction of it by their actions. They are uſually more zealous for the honour of God, more ſtrict in their obſervation of the duties of religion and morality, more eager and active for the converſion and good of men, than their fellows; they do not content themſelves with the middle regions of virtue, but are ever aſpiring to the moſt ſublime. He who is

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ſenſible that in the former part of his life he has greatly offended, and who does not find in himſelf theſe diſpoſitions, has much reaſon to doubt his own ſincerity: and thus have I ſuggeſted a criterion by which he may try it.

A ſecond reaſon why the penitent ſhould labour more abundantly, is, the danger of a relapſe, to which indifference or mediocrity of virtue would expoſe him. If he does not recede, as far as poſſible, from the confines of thoſe ſins, of which he has formerly been guilty—if he be not careful to avoid thoſe ſituations, which he has experienced to lead to them—and to forſake thoſe companions, in whoſe ſociety he has ſo frequently tranſgreſſed—it is ſcarcely poſſible that he ſhould preſerve his integrity;—his reſolutions, however firm he may think them, will be tranſient as the morning cloud and the early dew, which ſo ſoon paſſeth away. Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed, leſt he fall!—this caution is very neceſſary to be obſerved, even by thoſe who have

have conſtantly gone on in an undeviating courſe of virtue; but it more particularly applies to him who is juſt emerging from the gulphs of vice; for even the very habit of ſinning, independent of the depravity of heart which wickedneſs creates, will be continually ſoliciting his return. Let every one then, who is fully convinced of his former miſcarriages, and truly ſorry for them, conſtantly retain the example of St. Paul in his eye; and as that great apoſtle, who had erroneouſly offended, thought himſelf obliged to uſe ſuch extraordinary efforts in favour of the religion of Jeſus,—much more let him, who has ſo frequently ſinned knowingly and preſumptuouſly, exert every faculty of his ſoul, and employ every hour of his life, to exhibit himſelf a pattern of every Chriſtian grace and every human virtue.

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SERMON XX.

THE TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL ADVANTAGES OF GODLINESS.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 8.

Godlineſs is profitable unto all things; having the promiſe of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

IT is very unaccountable how it ever came to be imagined that religion was an unprofitable and ill-natured thing, and that if a man was determined earneſtly to follow it, he muſt give up all the pleaſures of this world, and quit every hope of advancing himſelf in it. This perſuaſion, I ſay, is very

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very unaccountable,—ſince the contrary is evidently the caſe; the religious man is of all others by far the moſt likely to obtain and to reliſh worldly happineſs, and to arrive at that degree of worldly honour and wealth which his birth and education will admit.

Two things are affirmed in the text,—one, that godlineſs has the promiſe of the life to come, i. e. that religion will procure for its followers everlaſting joys in heaven; another, that it has the promiſe of this life, that it will obtain for them an abundant ſhare of earthly good things.

As to the truth of the firſt, there is no diſpute; almoſt all are agreed, that if a man is devout towards God, fearing, loving, and ſerving him as he ought, and if he behaves to his fellow-creatures as the ſcripture, God's word, enjoins (acting by them as he would expect they ſhould act by him) and if he be temperate, ſober, and chaſte in his own perſonal behaviour, almoſt all are agreed, that if he conducts himſelf thus, when this life ſhall be ended, he will be rewarded in a ſtate which is to follow.

How,

How, indeed, is it poſſible that a rea- SERM. ſonable being ſhould believe otherwiſe? XX. That we did not come into the world without a maker, is very evident; that that maker is infinitely good, wiſe, and powerful, may eaſily be proved; whence it will follow, as he is good, that he delights in goodneſs;—as he is wiſe, that he knows fully when it is practiſed and when neglected;—and as he is powerful, that he is able to confer rewards on the obedient, and inflict puniſhment on the rebellious.

In the Scriptures alſo, are contained, to the ſame effect, the words of this our Maker; in them, by means of holy and good men, and by his beloved Son, he ſpeaks to us, and tells us of the happineſs which he has prepared for the righteous, and the miſery which is laid up for the wicked. God, who cannot lie, tells us this; let us, therefore, be ſure that it will happen according to his word. Theſe promiſes and threats are addreſſed without exception, to all men, and, whether we chooſe

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SERM. XX. it or not, we are all equally concerned in them; we can neither obtain the former, nor eſcape the latter, if we refuſe to act as God has commanded. It is neceſſary, perhaps, to mention this, becauſe the opinion is not very unuſual, that religion was only meant for particular ſets of men; for the clergy for inſtance, for the rich, for the old, for the ſickly, in ſhort for any but ourſelves. The rich are frequently for ſhifting off to the poor, and the poor again to the rich; the healthy would leave it to the ſick, and the ſick to the healthy; and ſome of all deſcriptions would gladly perſuade themſelves, that it was intended for others, but not for them. But yet no exception is found in the Scriptures in favour of any; all are commanded to be devout towards God, and juſt and benevolent towards men.

It is in vain, then, that we plead any particular difficulties, ariſing from our particular ſituation, rank, age, or profeſſion, in excuſe for diſobeying this command; ſuch

pleas

pleas will not be admitted; there is certainly no impoſſibility, be our condition what it may, of ſerving God, and being juſt and kind to our fellow-creatures: and though ſome may practiſe theſe duties in a greater extent than others, all may do it in *ſome* degree; allowance will be made for what is impracticable, but not for what is only difficult; if we ſtrive with difficulties, they will certainly yield to us; but if, from indolence and the deſire of indulging our vicious paſſions, we inglorioufly yield to them, and allege them as excuſes for our depravity, let us not flatter ourſelves with hopes that we ſhall either obtain the rewards which God has promiſed, or eſcape the condemnation which he has threatened. Godlineſs, by which is meant not only devotion towards our Maker, but an obedience to all his commands, has the promiſe of the life to come; and though we may imagine that we have ever ſo much to ſay for ourſelves, in palliation of our irreligion and diſobedience, on no other terms but religion and

SERM. XX. and obedience can we go to heaven. But it is aſſerted in the text, that godlineſs has likewiſe the promiſe of this preſent life; that is, that men ſhall be happy and ſucceſsful on earth, if they are pious to God and benevolent to men; the truth of which I now proceed to prove to you.

That the religious man is the moſt likely to be happy inwardly, let his outward condition be what it may, admits, I think, of no doubt; for he is certain that if he perſeveres in his goodneſs, though he may endure many calamities here, he will ſoon arrive at a period when he ſhall be removed from them, and be recompenſed with happineſs which ſhall never end. This conſideration, together with the certainty that he is even now in the favour, and under the protection of an all-powerful Being, cannot fail to ſupport him under all his earthly afflictions, and to diſarm them of their chief ſting:—whereas the wicked man, in adverſity, has no one comfort to which he can apply—all is dark and gloomy; from

from God he knows he has nothing to hope in this world, and nothing to expect in the next, but wrath and puniſhment. Nor in the greateſt outward proſperity can he entirely ſilence the voice of conſcience; that active monitreſs will at all times interpoſe and inſiſt on being attended to;—the uncertainty of life—the certainty of death—the tremendous day of judgment—and the dreadful torments which are denounced againſt the impenitent, are the ſubjects of her remonſtrances; ſubjects, which from time to time appal the ſinner in his moſt daring moments, and embitter his moſt favourite enjoyments. Now the certainty of the favour of God, and the ſure expectations of eternal rewards, muſt make the good man, in circumſtances however diſaſtrous, more happy than the moſt proſperous wicked perſon, whoſe pleaſures are thus terribly interrupted. But, added to this, there is much ground to conclude, both from reaſon and experience, that the religious and benevolent perſon, one who SERM. XX.

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There are many paſſages in Scripture containing aſſertions and promiſes to this effect; which, though they are not to be underſtood ſtrictly, as if the contrary never happened, yet we may depend upon it, that they are true in general. "I have been "young, and now am old (ſays the pſalmiſt) "and yet never ſaw I the righteous for-"ſaken, nor his ſeed begging their bread. "Thou, Lord, wilt bleſs the righteous, "with favour wilt thou compaſs him as "with a ſhield. Seek ye the kingdom of "God and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe "things ſhall be added unto you," that is, all earthly good things. And many are the texts of the like kind. But beſides theſe promiſes of God, the virtues which the religious man is obliged to practiſe have a natural tendency to raiſe his fortune, and

to

to advance him to diſtinction. Induſtry, temperance, punctuality, all of them qualities ſtrictly enjoined by religion, are certainly the readieſt means of acquiring riches; while the oppoſite vices, idleneſs, extravagance, and thoughtleſſneſs, almoſt conſtantly lead to poverty. The vicious man indeed ſometimes, from intereſted motives, may be to a certain degree induſtrious and temperate; but if his wickedneſs is known (which ſooner or later it will be) he is never ſo much confided in, as the religious man: the former, I have much reaſon to believe, will be no longer honeſt to me than it is his intereſt to be ſo,—while I have the ſtrongeſt ſecurity that the latter will be faithful, even againſt himſelf. In ſhort, a man, who does not concern himſelf about another world, does not act rationally, if he denies himſelf any preſent pleaſure or profit, however much he may injure others, provided he can eſcape being found out, or being puniſhed. This is very well known by the world; for experience is SERM. XX.

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tolerably uniform, that he who diſbelieves or deſpiſes his God, is injurious and treacherous towards his fellow-creature:—whereas the religious man, who looks forward to a day of judgment when he ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed everlaſtingly according as he has behaved in this world, will never deliberately injure his fellow-creature, even though he were ſure that it would never be known; becauſe he is convinced, that however much he might acquire by it at preſent, in the end he would be the greateſt of all loſers; he is certain, that though he ſhould gain the whole world by diſhoneſty, it would profit him nothing, becauſe he muſt loſe his own ſoul. Now ſuch a perſon as this, is certainly one, whom the generality would chooſe to truſt and to employ; and from the confidence of thoſe around us, and their readineſs to employ us in our ſeveral trades and profeſſions, ariſes that degree of riches, which our ſtations in life will admit. And not only do riches uſually follow the conſcientious diſcharge of our

duties towards God and man, but the eſteem, the affection, the reverence of our fellow-creatures, and all thoſe diſtinctions and honours which it is in their power to beſtow. Independently then of the rewards which await religion in the next world, it has likewiſe a tendency to procure for us, according to our ſpheres, a competent ſhare of earthly good things; Godlineſs has not only the promiſe of the life to come, but of this life alſo; and it may be aſſerted, without the fear of being confuted, that whatever be our rank, profeſſion or trade, the practice of religion and virtue is by far the readieſt road to every thing which is moſt valuable, both in heaven and on earth. SERM. XX.

And now, having brought my miniſtry amongſt you to a concluſion*, it cannot be improper for me to remind you all, and myſelf as well as you, that there is a day coming, when we ſhall all be called into judge-

* This was the author's laſt diſcourſe at Mileham.

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ment; I for the manner in which I have executed my charge, and you for the degree in which you have profited by my labours; let me beſeech you then to join your prayers to mine, that the Almighty, of his infinite mercy, would graciouſly pardon our omiſſions, and that he may ſo diſpoſe and turn our hearts, that, during that portion of life which may yet remain to us, I may exert myſelf with greater vigilance in turning thoſe who ſhall be intruſted to me unto righteouſneſs; and that you may make up for your deficiencies under me, by your more abundant improvement for the time to come: that ſo, when this tranſitory life is ended, we may finally meet in that bleſſed ſtate, where we ſhall live together in peace, love, and happineſs, for evermore!

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SUNDAY SCHOOL.

PROVERBS xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I TAKE the earlieſt opportunity of addreſſing myſelf to you on a ſubject in which I am much intereſted, and which, I am well convinced, will conduce very greatly to the good of our pariſh, if thoſe of you, who are able, will give me your aſſiſtance. The ſubject which I mean, is the inſtitution of a Sunday School. For ſome years paſt they have been very general all over the kingdom, and if they are carried on with the zeal, with which they have been

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taken up, there is every reaſon to hope for the moſt beneficial effects from them. There has not yet been time to experience, in any very conſiderable degree, what theſe effects are, becauſe few of the children, who have been educated at theſe ſchools, are arrived at an age of maturity; but, before many years are paſt, there is great ground to expect, that we ſhall have the lower orders of people much more informed,—much more religious,—much more honeſt, ſober, induſtrious, and orderly, than but too many of them are at preſent.

I know no greater objects of compaſſion than the children of thoſe parents, who are unable to give them an education,—unable themſelves to inſtruct them, or to pay for their being inſtructed by others, in their duty towards God, their neighbour, and themſelves. I know no objects who are more deſerving of your charity,—none on whom you can lay it out with a probability of doing ſo great a degree of good! It is allowed to be of the utmoſt importance to

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ſeaſon very early the minds of young people with religion—with honeſty—with ſobriety; when this has been done, it rarely happens but, ſooner or later, the good effects of it are ſeen; the ſeeds, thus early ſown, will perhaps, in ſome, lie buried for a time, ſmothered by the heat and inconſiderateneſs of youth, but they uſually break out and flouriſh at one period of life or other.—"Train up a child in the way he ſhould "go, and when he is old he will not de-"part from it." Inſtances, I fear, at preſent are too numerous of young perſons who, from the ignorance, negligence, or poverty, of their parents, are utterly unacquainted with the manner in which they ſhould ſerve God; entirely thoughtleſs of a life after this; altogether untaught in the obligation of doing to their neighbour, as they would wiſh their neighbour to do unto them; and quite uninformed how much it is their duty and intereſt to live temperately, ſoberly, and chaſtely. Either from the fall of Adam, or from ſome inherent depravity, it

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it is but too manifeſt that mankind have a tendency to what is evil. As the ground, when left to itſelf, yields abundantly hurtful and unprofitable weeds, while care and labour are required to make it produce corn and uſeful vegetables; ſo the human heart is ſpontaneouſly fertile of follies, vices, and idleneſs, but ſeldom, if ever, brings forth the good fruits of piety, virtue, and induſtry, without the culture of a ſober education. Now if this natural propenſity towards evil be permitted to grow up unmitigated and unbroken, if it be ſuffered to acquire the additional ſtrength of early and long cuſtom, what hopes can there be that it will ever be ſubdued? Experience gives us reaſon to fear that conſequences the moſt dreadful will enſue. Witneſs the oaths and the curſes with which the ears of the well-diſpoſed are ſo frequently ſhocked as they paſs along the ſtreets! witneſs the drunkenneſs and debauchery which ſo generally prevail! witneſs the multitude of unhappy abandoned females, who infeſt and diſhonour

every

every part of our kingdom, and ſeduce and corrupt our youth! witneſs the frequent attacks of deſperate and unprincipled want, both on property and life! witneſs, laſtly, the number of miſerable wretches who are yearly expiating theſe enormities, ſome by impriſonment, ſome by tranſportation, not a few by death. Of theſe and ſimilar violations of order, decency, morality, and religion, it may be aſſerted, without apprehenſion of controverſy, that the prime ſource and origin is the want of a ſober education: the chief actors and perpetrators of them are poor, ignorant creatures, uneducated, undiſciplined, uninformed, whoſe paſſions have never been tamed by habits of early reſtraint, and who have never been inſtructed in thoſe grand motives and preſervatives of virtue—juſtice and ſelf-denial, which are ſo weightily inculcated by our religion. I do not ſay that perſons of education are *never* to be found among the notoriouſly vicious; to ſuch an aſſertion there doubtleſs exiſt exceptions; but they are exceptions *only*, nor

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nor do they bear any ſort of proportion to the number of thoſe whoſe maturity has correſponded with the regular habits of their childhood.

Early good impreſſions are not eaſily effaced; the whole of life uſually takes its colour from the beginning; they who have paſſed the firſt ſtages well, do not afterwards turn aſide into the paths of unrighteouſneſs without many ſtruggles and much repugnancy; the ingenuous bluſhes of ſhame muſt firſt be quenched, the compunctious viſitings of remorſe muſt firſt be excluded, ere they can intermit or break off thoſe ſettled habits, which the having been ſo long engaged in them has ingrafted into their nature, and rendered not only eaſy but even delightful.

The concluſion then is, that by lending your aid to the education of the poor, you will confer on them a kindneſs of unſpeakable importance.

But it is not on them alone you will confer this kindneſs, you will likewiſe be highly

highly ſerviceable to your country. Every individual whom you aſſiſt in training to virtue and induſtry, is clearly a public benefit, ſince it is on the virtue and induſtry of individuals that the happineſs and proſperity of the ſtate muſt be founded. You will likewiſe confer a conſiderable benefit on yourſelves; it is not only your duty to aſſiſt in the education of the poor, but it is alſo your intereſt, and that in a very high degree. The tranquillity and the happineſs of private life depend very much upon thoſe around us; it is in the power of the loweſt of our neighbours to take very much from our comfort. To live amongſt a ſet of people ſunk in profaneneſs and debauchery would alone be a great diminution of the happineſs of a feeling man; beſides which, that, he could not but be always in danger, and frequently ſubject to their inſults—their extortions—their frauds—their violence. Now, I know nothing which is ſo likely to free us from theſe dangers, as the aſſiſting in the education of the children of thoſe

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thoſe parents, who are themſelves deſtitute of the means. We muſt teach the poor that there is a life after this, where they will be everlaſtingly happy, if they behave themſelves ſoberly, juſtly, and religiouſly, while they are on earth; or where they will be everlaſtingly miſerable, if they are profane, debauched, and diſhoneſt; we muſt teach them that it is their intereſt to live quietly and honeſtly, that ſuch a life is the moſt likely means of procuring a livelihood, and of getting themſelves forward; but that if it were not ſo, even though they ſhould gain the whole world by a contrary behaviour, the whole world would be worth nothing to them, when they muſt loſe their own ſouls.

We muſt teach them theſe things early, for if, as I obſerved before, we ſuffer the bias of human nature towards evil to gain ſtrength by habit, but ſmall are the proſpects that we ſhall ever be able to ſubdue it.

I confeſs that the *chief* ſucceſs which I can expect to meet with in my miniſtry, is among

among the young; it is here then that I wiſh chiefly to exert myſelf, and it is here that I would prevail on you to concur with me. SERM. XXI.

As then ye would have faithful ſervants and dependants, induſtrious labourers and mechanics, quiet and inoffenſive neighbours; as ye would travel with ſafety on the roads, or lie down to reſt ſecurely in your beds; as ye would preſerve your perſons and properties free from violence and rapine of every kind; and as ye would avoid the reverſe of all theſe requiſites to tranquillity and comfort, ye are bound to favour and to promote the cauſe of education. I call upon you then, as men of religion and morality, and by conſequence intereſted in their advancement and diffuſion; I call upon you, as ye wiſh well to good government, and are friends to the proſperity of your country; I call upon you, as ye would contribute to the turning of many unto righteouſneſs, and above all, as ye value your own intereſt and happineſs both here

and

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and hereafter, to aſſiſt to the utmoſt of your abilities, not only now, but at all other times, in the training of the children of poverty to habits of virtue, induſtry and religion!

Let it not be imagined that this ſummons is addreſſed only to the moſt wealthy; none, who are in any degree able to aſſiſt me, are unconcerned in it. Remember the widow's two mites, and the praiſes which her generoſity won of our Saviour. Ye read, that from him only to whom much is given, much will be required; but can ye ſuppoſe, that from him to whom little is given, there will be required nothing? Far from it! Expectations are formed of us in proportion to our reſpective abilities; and he may obtain God's favour in as high a degree, who gives a little out of his want, as he who gives much out of his abundance; but let it be remembered that he will be equally expoſed to God's anger, if he refuſes what his circumſtances will admit. I hope that none of you will be pre-

prevented from encouraging the inſtitution, for which I am pleading, from an idea, that it will be of diſſervice, rather than of advantage, to the community. This idea, I am told, has been entertained by ſome, though I can ſcarcely think it more than a pretext to ſave their money. Their argument, ſuch as it is, is this; that inſtruction will make the poor diſcontented with their ſituations; they will think themſelves qualified for higher things, and will either work unwillingly, or will altogether forſake the laborious employments for which they were deſigned. What! is it poſſible that the little learning it falls within our plan to give, can be attended with this effect? We only propoſe to teach our ſcholars to read and to ſpell, and to inſtruct them in the rudiments of the Chriſtian religion, by which they may be enabled hereafter to peruſe any good books which they may procure, and, when they come to church, to underſtand the prayers and ſermon.

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Will knowledge ſo limited as this make a man imagine that he is fit for the ſenate, the pulpit, the bar, or the counting-houſe? I ſhould rather ſuppoſe, that inſtead of making thoſe who acquire it diſſatisfied with their ſtations, it will have exactly the oppoſite effect; that inſtead of leading to diſcontent and envy at thoſe above them, and making them fretful and idle, it will rather prevail on them not to covet nor deſire other men's goods and conditions, but to learn and labour truly to get their own living, in that ſtate of life unto which it has pleaſed God to call them.

Let me appeal to your experience; moſt of you, doubtleſs, at one time or other, have employed ſervants or labourers, who had arrived at the degree of knowledge of which we ſpeak; could you perceive that this circumſtance weakened either their inclination or their ability to ſerve you? Did their having been early taught their duty to God, and being frequently able by books to

to remind themſelves of it, make them leſs attentive to your concerns? Did their having been betimes inſtructed, that they ought to do unto their neighbour as they would wiſh their neighbour to do unto them, render them more ready to impoſe on you themſelves, or to ſuffer you to be impoſed on by others? Did their knowing how to ſpend a part of the ſabbath with their Bible in their hands, or in ſome other uſeful reading, cauſe them to handle the plough, the ſpade, or the flail, with leſs ſtrength or dexterity? The idea is ridiculous!

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Having thus addreſſed myſelf to thoſe of my audience, who are to beſtow this charity, I will now ſay a few words to thoſe who are to receive it. Remember then (it is to the parents that I ſpeak, to thoſe parents I mean, who are themſelves unable to give their children an education) remember that the plan which we are now forming is to confer on your children the greateſt of all poſſible benefits; it is to confer on them the knowledge of God, and

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of their duty towards him; it is to teach them how to behave themſelves properly towards their neighbours, and conſequently the way to be loved and reſpected; it is to enforce on them the neceſſity of being honeſt and induſtrious, which is the ſureſt means of gaining a livelihood, and getting forward in the world; it is to inculcate upon them their obligation to be ſober, chaſte, and temperate, without which virtues no man can be either amiable or happy; and, laſtly, above all, it is to put them in the way of obtaining eternal ſalvation.

Let me entreat you, then, not to be backward in profiting by this uſeful inſtitution; ſeek to get your children admitted into it, and do all in your power to make them obſerve its rules; take care that their attendance be conſtant, and that they come at the appointed hours, and ſend them as neat and as decent as your circumſtances will admit.

Nothing, I can promiſe you, ſhall be wanting on my part to their improvement,

and

and there is every reaſon to hope, from the circumſtances of our ſociety, that we ſhall raiſe ſuch a ſubſcription as will enable us to confer rewards on thoſe children who ſhall moſt diſtinguiſh themſelves by their regularity, good behaviour, and proficiency in learning. SERM. XXI.

SERMON XXII.

THE EVILS OF BAD COMPANY.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 33.

Evil communications corrupt good manners.

AMONG the many dangers to which we are expoſed during our earthly pilgrimage, there are none againſt which men, in every period of life, ſhould be more on their guard, than thoſe which ariſe from bad company. It is dangerous to our character, dangerous to our fortune, dangerous to our quiet, dangerous to our morals, and, laſtly, it is dangerous to our eternal ſalvation. The young and inexperienced are with difficulty made to comprehend, and to believe

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this aſſertion; well aſſured of their preſent integrity, they are unwilling to think that any argument, any invitation, any example can induce them to part with it; proud of their good character, and conſcious perhaps, at this time of deſerving it, they will not allow that it reſts on ſo unſtable a foundation,—that ſo trivial a circumſtance as their converſing with this or that ſet of acquaintance, ſhould have power to injure it; and as they are ſtedfaſtly determined, that the accidental exceſſes, to which they may occaſionally give way, ſhall never interfere with their application to ſtudy, or to buſineſs, they do not ſee how their fortune, or their quiet, ſhould ſuffer from it. As to their morals, they will not do themſelves ſo much injuſtice as to apprehend, for a moment, that any thing external can influence them! But, notwithſtanding this preſumption, effects will follow their cauſes; and he who is not careful in the choice of his companions, whatever precautions he may form againſt them, will be ſure to ſuffer,

ſuffer, ſooner or later, in one, or all, of theſe particulars, which I have mentioned. SERM. XXII.

In the firſt place, I have aſſerted that bad company is dangerous to our characters. To have the ſame attachments and diſlikes, the ſame purſuits and averſions, has always been eſteemed the foundation of friendſhip; ſimilarity of diſpoſition, of ſentiments, of manners, is the uſual bond which unites companions together; to the truth of this, every language, by its proverbial maxims, bears teſtimony; and undoubtedly, generally ſpeaking, it is true; for what communion has light with darkneſs? what fellowſhip the votaries of religion and virtue, with the children of profaneneſs and debauchery? I will not however deny but that a virtuous man may for a time (long he cannot) take up his abode in the tents of ungodlineſs, and preſerve his honour and his conſcience untainted; but ſtill I aſſert that his character will ſuffer:—the world forms its judgments by general rules, and knowing how much, for the

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the moſt part, companions reſemble each other, it has neither ſufficient candour, nor ſufficient leiſure, to examine for exceptions; when it ſees a man a frequent ſpectator of the exceſſes of the vicious, it takes for granted that he is a partaker alſo, and an approver of them; nor is it in all caſes, nor in any immediately, that by forſaking his profligate intimates, he can recover the good name which he has loſt.

But if bad company be thus hurtful to our characters, it is probable that it will have a proportionable pernicious influence on our fortunes. Reputation has been always looked on as the ſureſt ſtep to wealth and preferment. Whoever wiſhes to advance himſelf, eſteems a good character as uſeful, if not eſſential, to that end, and is as anxious to preſerve it, as the miſer to preſerve his gold. If he is accuſed of vices or follies, of which he knows himſelf to be innocent, he complains of the injury to his reputation, as an injury to his fortune: but what ground would there be for ſuch anxiety,

anxiety, or ſuch complaint, if it were not obſerved, in general, that to be well ſpoken of, facilitated and forwarded our advancement, while the contrary, in an equal degree, prevented or retarded it? SERM. XXII.

But I have already proved that our characters are hurt by bad company, and therefore it follows of courſe that the injury is extended to our fortunes alſo. Let the ambitious, the covetous, thoſe who aſpire after dignity or wealth, think of this, and if they have no *better* motive for declining the ſociety of the vicious, let them decline it as they have regard to the gratification of their favourite paſſion; let them be reſtrained by their intereſt, if they have loſt their virtue. Bad company may likewiſe hurt our advancement in life another way, as it uſually involves us in idleneſs and extravagance, and leads us to diſſipate, or at leaſt, to neglect to improve, the proviſion bequeathed us by our anceſtors; but this is ſo ſelf-evident, that I ſhall not dwell on it.

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I go on then to prove what I aſſerted, in the next place, that bad company is dangerous to our quiet. Let us ſuppoſe a man of religion and virtue to cheriſh an intimacy with one, whom he knows to be deficient in both theſe reſpects; let us ſuppoſe that he is induced to it, either by the hopes of reforming him, by ſome latent ſparks of goodneſs which he may imagine that he has ſeen in him, or merely on account of the pleaſure which he may take in that eaſe and elegance of manners, which the vicious ſometimes poſſeſs; qualifications which, it is well known, are not incompatible with the moſt abandoned profligacy! Let us ſuppoſe that the firſt mentioned perſon is ſo eſtabliſhed in his integrity and reputation, that neither ſuffer from the connexion, ſtill I aſſert that his quiet is in danger, for that he cannot reaſonably expect, but opportunity and paſſion inviting, his companion will take the ſame liberties at his expence, which he well knows he has often done at the expence of others.

others. As he who takes a viper frequently to his boſom, though he may awhile eſcape with impunity, will one time or other certainly repent of his raſhneſs; ſo let that man beware, who has made choice of a confirmed vicious character for his intimate, for however ſtrong in appearance his attachment be, if appetite or intereſt invite, he will certainly ſting him to the heart. SERM. XXII.

Vice is of a very baſe and ungenerous nature; it is governed ſolely by ſelf, and is therefore totally incapable of true friendſhip; it may frequently put on its ſemblance, but ſooner or later, if occaſion ariſe, it will afford evidence too convincing, how far remote it is from poſſeſſing the reality. Can any reliance be placed on him, who lives in a continued ſtate of diſobedience and ingratitude to his Creator, Preſerver, and Redeemer, that he will not, when any imaginary pleaſure or profit may accrue to him by it, betray or even ruin his fellow-creatures? But if, added to this ſtate of rebellion towards God, he has been known

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in his general commerce with his brethren to be falſe and treacherous, is it not the height of folly in any individual to expoſe his family and affairs to his machinations, under the vain hope that he ſhould belie his general conduct to be true to him alone? Yet, in ſpite of all the examples of broken faith, of the honour of relations violated, and important truſts betrayed, with ſuch pleaſing outward talents is the libertine frequently endowed, that there are multitudes of unſuſpecting perſons, who are conſtantly making the experiment, though the event almoſt as conſtantly turns out in the interruption or ruin of their quiet.

But the injury to our character, to our fortune, and to our quiet, which ariſes from bad company, is of trivial importance, in compariſon of that which remains to be conſidered. Bad company is prejudicial to our morals, and of conſequence dangerous to our eternal ſalvation. Man is, by nature, prone to imitation; this is obſerved by every wiſe parent, and turned as much as poſſible

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to their childrens' advantage, by every good one. Thoſe teachers and thoſe companions are always ſelected who, it is believed, will ſet the faireſt and moſt virtuous examples. Much depends on the obſervance of this caution; our manners, both in childhood and in youth, are commonly copied from thoſe amongſt whom we live; and the ſubſequent periods of life uſually take colour from the habits which we have acquired during thoſe early ſeaſons. Though the genius and the underſtanding may be derived from nature, it is education, for the moſt part, which forms and faſhioneth the heart; by education, I not only mean that portion of it, more properly ſo called, the inſtructions, the counſels, which we receive from parents and maſters, but thoſe leſſons, likewiſe, which we imbibe, in ſome meaſure from all who are ſuffered to approach us—leſſons which are derived from a much more efficacious ſource than formal precept—from familiar converſation and example. What we are taught, however wiſe, virtuous, and prudent,

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prudent, will have little effect on us, if it be contradicted by what we ſee; in vain does a father inſtil into his ſon the pureſt principles of morality—in vain does he exhibit, in his own conduct, a pattern of the moſt perfect obedience to them, if his houſe and table be open to vicious inmates, and his children permitted to be ſpectators of their exceſſes. If a young perſon perceives that vice is no excluſion from the countenance and familiarity of thoſe whom he has been accuſtomed to honour, it cannot but greatly diminiſh the abhorrence in which he has been taught to hold it. But though it is in the earlieſt periods of life, when the principles are unfixed and the mind open to every impreſſion, that bad company is chiefly dangerous;—there is no time in which it can be frequented with ſecurity. Many have begun the world with the greateſt applauſe, have afforded to their anxious friends the faireſt proſpect of them—have even arrived at a mature period of manhood, without a material deviation from the path of virtue, and

and have then ſuddenly blaſted all the hopes, which have been formed of them, by the fatal prevalence of bad company. Beſides the tendency in man, already noticed, to imitate what he conſtantly ſees, there is yet another cauſe of danger to the morals, from profligate aſſociates. It is the property of vice to endeavour to draw over to its party all who come within its influence:—the libertine, the drunkard, and all the other votaries of profligacy, have ever taken delight to render others as wicked as themſelves; to compaſs this point, they ſpare no arguments, no ſolicitations:—the ſons of virtue, I fear, are not half ſo anxious to make converts as the children of darkneſs to make apoſtates. Let not him, therefore, who has not ſufficient ſelf-denial to decline the ſociety of the vicious, flatter himſelf that he ſhall have ſufficient fortitude to withſtand their temptations; more particularly when ſupported, as they always are, by the ſhafts of ridicule. If he preſerve his integrity, his eſcape is miraculous; his teme-

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rity merits not that he ſhould: for who does not deſerve the fate he experiences, who unneceſſarily expoſes himſelf to a danger from whence little leſs than a miracle can reſcue him without deſtruction? Let me not, however, be miſtaken; I do not mean that any ſuch inevitable hazard is incurred by our accidentally falling into the ſociety of the profligate; or that, on account of the uneaſineſs we occaſionally undergo in their company, we ſhould therefore altogether avoid it; for if this were required of us, we muſt needs, as St. Paul obſerves, go out of the world; we muſt abſtain from all intercourſe with mankind whatever; and beſides, there would be a want of charity in ſuch extreme caution, for if the vicious were driven to herd with themſelves, excluſively, all hope of their reformation would be done away. Vice, though ſufficiently infectious, is not, I truſt, by thoſe at all well principled, to be imbibed at caſual interviews; what I wiſh you to guard againſt is a fondneſs for the ſociety of vice, whatever

ever ſeducing attractions it may poſſeſs— and an intimacy, a cloſe connection with the vicious; you may perform, with ſafety, the offices of civility and neighbourhood to them, but you are not to take them for intimates; if you do, be aſſured that you will one day, in the bitterneſs of your heart, lament it, when you attribute to them, as you juſtly may, one or all of theſe calamities—the ruin of your character—the injury done to your fortune—the interruption of your quiet—the perverſion of your morals—or (which God forbid) the loſs of your eternal ſalvation.

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THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

LUKE viii. 8.

And other fell upon good ground, and ſprang up, and bare fruit an hundred fold.

THESE words are the concluſion of the parable of the ſower who went out to ſow his ſeed. The whole of it is thus related by St. Luke.—" A ſower went out to ſow " his ſeed, and as he ſowed, ſome fell by " the way ſide, and it was trodden down, " and the fowls of the air devoured it; and " ſome fell upon a rock, and as ſoon as it " was ſprung up it withered away, be- " cauſe it lacked moiſture. And ſome " fell

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This parable was ſpoken by Jeſus Chriſt to the people at large, and, at their requeſt, explained afterwards to his diſciples in private. The different ways in which the goſpel would be received at its firſt publication, is, perhaps, the chief object of it, but it certainly applies, very naturally and exactly, to mankind in every ſubſequent period. By the word of God is meant, religion, and you have here the behaviour of four different ſorts of perſons, on having it propoſed to them.

Firſt, you have thoſe, into whoſe heart any pious inſtruction falls, like ſeed ſown by the way ſide; it makes perhaps none, or perhaps only a momentary impreſſion; for as the birds inſtantly pick up the ſeed, ſo the devil comes immediately and removes the impreſſion of the word of God, if any at

at all be made; and they who have heard it, profit nothing by it. SERM. XXIII.

How many are there, who, on receiving any pious advice from their parents, their graver friends, or their miniſter, or perhaps on accidentally meeting with it in any good book, are filled with diſbelief and contempt, ridicule it as the product of bigotry and ſuperſtition, or, if by chance it gain a momentary reception with them (as even with the moſt abandoned, ſo irreſiſtible is truth, it ſometimes will do) they ſuffer the great enemy of their ſalvation, the very next inſtant, to drive it from their minds. There are but too many of this firſt claſs, but they bear no proportion to thoſe of the two next, which are deſcribed by our Saviour.

For, ſecondly, we have the ſeed ſown on the rock, by which thoſe are depictured who received religious inſtruction with joy; for a while believe, but, having no root, in time of temptation fall away.

Now people of this deſcription are much more common than abſolute unbelievers;

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religion carries with it ſo much authority, and is ſo congenial to the nature of man, that the generality, at one time or other of their lives, liſten to its dictates with pleaſure—confeſs in their hearts, the ſource of comfort which might be derived from it—reſolve, perhaps faintly, to act in compliance with its commands,—but in time of temptation (when ſome circumſtances happens, in which their temporal and eternal intereſt is at variance, in which their inclination points one way, and their duty another; when they are required to make ſome great ſacrifice, of their life perhaps, or their character, or their friends, or their property) they fall away, they preſer earth to heaven, they ſhew clearly, that with whatever delight they at firſt appeared to receive religion, it took no root in their hearts, ſince they baſely and poorly ſacrifice it ſometimes even to the ſlighteſt conſiderations.

The perſons chiefly aimed at by our Saviour here were, I believe, thoſe early Chriſtians,

tians, whom he foreſaw would renounce their faith on the perſecutions that would be carried on againſt them. Theſe perſecutions were very dreadful; they extended not only to impriſonment, bonds, ſtripes, but to death alſo, and that frequently in the moſt terrible torments. We of this day can ſcarce wonder, much leſs ought we too harſhly to cenſure, if fleſh and blood, in ſome inſtances, were not able to ſtand out againſt ſuch formidable aſſaults; and yet there were multitudes of every age and ſex who reſiſted unto blood, who willingly, nay joyfully, laid down their lives, rather than abandon the good part which they had choſen. SERM. XXIII.

We (bleſſed be God for it) live in more quiet times, we are not likely to be called to ſuch hazardous trials of our conſtancy; we ſhall ſcarce be expoſed to temptations of this extreme kind; it is therefore the more incumbent upon us to make the trifling renunciations, and to incur the petty dangers to which we may, and moſt probably ſhall, even

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even now, be ſummoned. The world often expects from us one thing, and our religion demands of us another; ſuppoſing we comply with the latter, we ſhall loſe, perhaps, ſome one who may call himſelf a friend, or we ſhall injure our fortune, or, what is more likely, we ſhall fall under the cenſure of our neighbours; our underſtanding or our ſpirit will be called in queſtion; we ſhall be eſteemed ſingular, affected, and moroſe, or we ſhall become, poſſibly, only a momentary jeſt to our companions. Terrible diſcouragements theſe from doing what God commands, and what our own hearts dictate! and yet experience may convince us that there are multitudes (alas! too probably we ourſelves are of the number) who are perpetually induced by them, ſlight as they are, to ſpeak and to act in direct oppoſition both to their knowledge and their inclination. Perhaps you hope (particularly when the inſtance appears trifling) that there is more of folly than of guilt in this; but remember, that the more trifling

trifling the inſtance is, the leſs ſerious can be your ſufferings or danger in not complying with it! remember, likewiſe, that the gradation from ſmall conceſſions to great, is eaſy and precipitate; and remember, above all, the menaces of our Saviour, which is directed againſt thoſe, who, from a fooliſh regard to the opinion of the world, are induced to act in contradiction to what they know and feel to be right:— SERM. XXIII.

"Whoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and "of my words, in this adulterous and "ſinful generation, of him, alſo, ſhall the "Son of man be aſhamed, when he cometh "in the glory of the Father, with the holy "angels."

We will now proceed to conſider the third ſort of perſons, deſcribed by our Saviour as having the word of God offered to them. Their reception of it is likened to ground overgrown with thorns, receiving good ſeed; as the thorns ſpring up with the ſeed, choke it in its growth, and prevent it from coming to maturity, ſo the love

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love of riches, of pleaſures, of honours, predominate in the mind of theſe men, entirely outgrow the word of God, and ſuffer it not to attain to any degree of perfection. This is certainly the caſe with greatly too many; they have received, perhaps, a pious education, and were once fully perſuaded, that the care of their immortal ſouls is the one thing needful, or, perhaps even now, whenever they are brought to think ſeriouſly on the ſubject, they acknowledge in their hearts its reality and conſequence; they believe firmly that there are ſuch places as heaven and hell for the virtuous and for the wicked; they feel ſome faint aſpirations after the happineſs allotted to thoſe who die in the Lord, and are more deeply ſenſible of the terrible circumſtance of falling into the hands of an offended and avenging God. Theſe are promiſing impreſſions, if they would but remain,—fair ſeeds, if they could but be brought to maturity; but, alas! they are fallen among thorns; they have gained admittance into

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an heart, in which this world, its cares and its pleaſures are uppermoſt, and by theſe they are early blaſted in their riſe, and immaturely deſtroyed. The things of this world, by being immediately preſent, and perpetually the objects of our ſenſes, have an undue influence with us; this we cannot but acknowledge, when we compare them with the things of the next; but, perhaps, we enter into the compariſon very ſeldom, or, perhaps, it makes but very ſlight impreſſion, and is driven from our minds the very next moment by the firſt human care or pleaſure which comes acroſs us. However this be, there are multitudes apparently going on, as if there were no life after this, who yet do not pretend to deny there is one; but they *muſt* (they ſay) attend to raiſing their fortunes here, or, they are determined that they will enjoy their pleaſures, and leave futurity to ſhift for itſelf. Is this wiſe, is this prudent? or rather, is it not the extremity of folly and madneſs? Shall I, when called up to take

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take ſuch ſteps as may ſecure to me the greateſt happineſs to all eternity, ſhall I allege that I muſt beg to be excuſed, that I am attending to my farm or my merchandiſe, by which I expect to be richer or more proſperous for the next dozen or ſcore years, and that as to what comes after, I will take my chance?

I do not, myſelf, think that there are many unbelievers in the world; I am perſuaded that the being of a God, a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, are too deeply engraven on the human mind for many to be able to ſhake them off: but yet it is too evident that numbers live as if they did not believe in them;—why elſe do preſent cares and pleaſures ſo greatly preponderate?—why are there found men who will prefer almoſt any other engagement, however ſlight, to attending to the duties of religion?—why are there thoſe who, living in the greateſt affluence themſelves, can ſcarce be prevailed on to part even with their ſuperfluities to aſſiſt their diſtreſſed

treſſed brethren, when they know that their bleſſed Redeemer has promiſed that he will reward all kindneſs done to the needy, in the ſame manner as if it had been done to himſelf?—why are there thoſe who are men-pleaſers, rather than pleaſers of God; who prefer the approbation of their fellow-creatures, to the approbation of their Creator; who will venture to incur the divine diſpleaſure, rather than run the hazard of hurting their fortunes or their intereſt, or relinquiſhing ſome trifling amuſement?—why, laſtly, are there thoſe who, ſtill more impious, are continually affronting God, by taking his holy name in vain, in direct defiance of his expreſs commands? Do not theſe men act as if they did not believe? Would they not be more conſiſtent, if this were really the caſe? SERM. XXIII.

If there be not another world, let us make the moſt of this; let us eat, drink, and be merry; let us follow the bent of inclination, wherever it leads us. If we were

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were ſure of this, I really do not ſee that we ſhould be culpable (however miſtaken we might be in the means) in purſuing what appeared to us to make the moſt for our preſent happineſs; but if there be another world, nay, if there be but the ſlighteſt chance that there may be one, it is worth our while to pauſe and to heſitate; it is worth our while to conſider, whether the paltry, ſhort pleaſures which are to be enjoyed here, are deſerving that we ſhould run for them, even the moſt diſtant poſſibility of being miſerable for ever. But there is;—there is a world after this: and, as I obſerved before, even the greateſt ſinners do not, generally ſpeaking, pretend to deny it; and yet in the groſſeſt defiance to common ſenſe and prudence, they will not pay any regard to it, but beſtow all their attention on their preſent ſtate; the ſeeds of piety, of carefulneſs with reſpect to futurity, were originally ſown in their nature, but they have been entirely

entirely overgrown and choked by the thorns of earthly cares and pleaſures. SERM. XXIII.

There is ſtill a fourth deſcription of perſons, mentioned in the parable, by whom the word of God is not received in this ungracious, unthankful, unproductive manner. Theſe are likened to the good ground, which bears fruit an hundred fold; they are repreſented as hearing, with an honeſt and good heart, the precepts of religion, ſtedfaſtly retaining them, and bringing forth the due fruits with patience. Theſe fruits are piety and virtue, reverence to our Creator, and good-will to our fellow-creatures, with an uniform habit on every opportunity of exhibiting both in practice. This muſt be done with patience; that is, we muſt perſevere in it unwearicdly, ſo long as it pleaſes heaven that we remain in this world: if we draw back at any time of our lives, and die before we repent, God will have no pleaſure in us.—"All the righteouſneſs that we

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" have done before, ſhall not be men-
" tioned; it ſhall be counted for nothing;
" in the iniquity, that we have commit-
" ted, we ſhall die." St. Peter is very expreſs on this head:—" If, after they
" have eſcaped the pollutions of the world
" through the knowledge of the Lord and
" Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they are again en-
" tangled therein, and overcome; the lat-
" ter end is worſe with them than the
" beginning." We muſt, therefore, continue our exertions to the end of our courſe, we muſt fight the good fight to the concluſion of our ſpiritual warfare, or it will avail us nothing. Thoſe who thus perſevere, in ſpite of all temptations to the contrary (whatever the children of this world may arrogate to themſelves) are the only truly wiſe; by giving a decided preference to the things that are to laſt for ever and ever, over thoſe which laſt only for a few ſhort years, they not only with certainty obtain them, but, as a preſent reward, as well

well as natural conſequence of their wiſ- SERM.
dom, they uſually enjoy an infinitely greater XXIII.
portion of proſperity during their continuance on earth.

SERMON XXIV.

THE DANGER OF PROCRASTINATION. FELIX.

ACTS XXIV. LATTER PART OF V. 25.

Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient ſeaſon I will call for thee.

AMONG the various kinds of ſelf-deception that of all others is the moſt dangerous, by which we lull ourſelves into contentment with our preſent vicious courſe of life, on a perſuaſion that we ſhall repent and reform at ſome future time: for however wickedly men may *live*, it is certain that the generality deſire to *die* holily; almoſt all believe

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that there is a God above, who delights in and will reward piety and virtue, and who hates and will puniſh iniquity and vice; they know therefore, and whenever they think about it, will acknowledge, that accordingly as they behave themſelves in this life, ſuch will be their lot to all eternity. With ſuch a conviction it would be almoſt impoſſible for them to continue in their ſins, if they did not impoſe on themſelves with the intention, and really make themſelves believe, that they purpoſe one day to repent of all that is paſt, and live, or at leaſt die, good Chriſtians.

To ſhew the folly and danger of continuing in our ſins, on this preſumption, that we ſhall one day repent of them, and, for that reaſon, of delaying and putting off our repentance and reformation, ſhall be my endeavour in the following diſcourſe.

In the firſt place, ſo uncertain is human life, that we cannot promiſe to ourſelves another day; there is no one of us, who has arrived at any age, who cannot recollect

lect inſtances of ſome friend or acquaintance unexpectedly ſnatched away by death, who was as likely to have been alive at this time as himſelf. What has happened to others, we all know may happen to ourſelves. Without repentance, our Bible tells us, we cannot attain ſalvation; how abſurd is it then to venture ſo great a ſtake on ſo deſperate a chance as the continuance of human life! SERM. XXIV.

We will grant, for a moment, that a man is in earneſt in his deſign of repenting of his paſt ſins, and living virtuouſly at ſome future time; we will ſuppoſe that he even fixes the very time; (for an intention of doing a thing one time or other without fixing when, can ſcarcely be called any intention at all) we will ſuppoſe then that he fixes the very time, let it be two years diſtant, or one year, or a month, nay, let it be only one day; let him ſeriouſly have determined and vowed,—'I will repent and be virtuous to-morrow;' "Thou fool, this "night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee;" the ſword of death is conſtantly hanging

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over thy head, how ſoon it will fall, God alone knows:—To-day alone is thine; but to-day thou haſt reſolved to continue in thy ſins; if then thou liveſt not till to-morrow, what muſt be thy fate to all eternity? We cannot deny but this is poſſible, and if it *be* poſſible, how great is our folly to neglect the opportunity which is in our power, for one at which we may never arrive?

Even in this view, conſidering the uncertainty of human life, and the poſſibility, nay the probability, that we may never reach the time which we have fixed for repentance, to poſtpone it is highly abſurd and hazardous: but there is yet another danger, even if we *do* arrive at the time fixed on, and that is, that we may not be then diſpoſed to put our deſign in execution. If we find it ſo hard to part with our ſins *now*, we may be aſſured that the difficulty will be greatly increaſed by delay; what we have been long accuſtomed to do, we never quit without much reluctance and great efforts, and in proportion to the length

length of time that we have practiſed any thing, reluctance to lay it aſide will be greater, and our efforts muſt by conſequence be increaſed. To repent and reform, may be eaſy now; ſin, perhaps, is new to us; we are not yet confirmed in the habits of it: but if we go on and inure ourſelves to it, to caſt it off may not, and probably will not, be in our power. SERM. XXIV.

The prophet Jeremiah repreſents the reformation of a ſinner accuſtomed to a long courſe of ſinning, as ſo unlikely as to be impoſſible:—"Can the Ethiopian "change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots, "then may ye alſo do good that are ac- "cuſtomed to do evil:" not that there is any real impoſſibility in the caſe, but it is ſo very difficult, and happens, I fear, ſo very ſeldom, that it may almoſt be ſaid never to happen at all.

Let us not then perſuade ourſelves that our ſins will be leſs pleaſing to us at ſome future time, than they are at preſent: habit will certainly have increaſed our attachment to

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to them, and it will require an infinitely greater portion of ſelf-denial to forſake them. It is much to be feared, that when the time arrives, at which we fixed to begin our repentance, we ſhall again find ſome excuſe to poſtpone it to a diſtant day; and ſo we may go on continually reſolving, and continually lingering in our ſins, till the hour of death arrives, puts a final period both to reſolutions and exertions, and irrevocably determines our condemnation.—In the grave there is no repentance.—How ſhall we then condemn our folly, and execrate our weakneſs, for ſo abſurdly neglecting the opportunities which were our own, and truſting to one, which a little common reflection might have told us, we ſhould never think arrived.—In that baniſhment from the preſence of God, which the wicked will ſuffer after death, the recollection of their neglect of the time and opportunity which was granted them for the acquiſition of eternal happineſs, will not probably be one of their leaſt puniſhments.

If

If a man in this world miſcarries in any ſcheme, or meets with any loſs which he might have prevented by a little common prudence and labour, how greatly does the thought of ſuch negligence embitter the diſappointment! how then muſt the remembrance of that man's imprudence torment him, which has deprived him of eternal happineſs, and doomed him to everlaſting miſery! SERM. XXIV.

But to return: thoſe, I believe, who continue to put off their repentance, and who yet are convinced of its neceſſity, and think that they ſhall one day certainly ſet about it, encourage themſelves in this delay by the repeated declarations, which they meet with in ſcripture, of the mercy and long-ſuffering of God. To a truly penitent ſinner God will no doubt grant forgiveneſs; but beſides the probability of a man's being cut off in his ſins, before he arrives at the time of repentance, there is great reaſon to fear that God may be ſo far provoked by his repeated delays, as to deny him the aſſiſtance

of

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of his holy ſpirit; and without that, all his former good reſolutions will be vain. God hath indeed ſolemnly promiſed to give his holy ſpirit to thoſe who aſk it, but then it muſt be to ſuch as aſk it properly; and how far a long continuance in ſin may harden our hearts, and prevent the efficacy of our prayers, it is impoſſible to determine, and highly dangerous to hazard the experiment. If our conſciences *now* remonſtrate with us on the folly and danger of our paſt ſinful life, if we *now* feel within ourſelves any diſpoſition towards repentance, let us conſider ſuch remonſtrances and ſuch diſpoſitions as the immediate ſuggeſtion of heaven; let us attend to them, let us obey them; the gate of mercy is now open to us, let us haſte and enter: let us not put off to a future time, what perhaps at a future time we ſhall not be able to perform! *now* it is in our power, and we may be aſſured God will aſſiſt us; the very inclination that we feel towards it, is an earneſt that he will! *Now*, this preſent moment, if we are ſincere, is the time to make our peace with him: if we put

it

it off, it may never be in our power again; the day of grace may be paſt—the time of reconciliation gone for ever! SERM. XXIV.

The opinion, I fear, is but too common, that repentance and reformation are the works of a moment; and that if a man has but time to ſhed a few tears, and ſay a few prayers a little while before his death, he will atone for the ſins of a whole life, and find acceptance with God.

The miſtake (for a miſtake it certainly is) is a very dangerous one.—To ſin, we all know, alas! is very eaſy; yet no one arrives at once, even at the height of wickedneſs; by gradual and ſlow ſteps, even that fatal progreſs is made: but infinitely more gradual, and infinitely more ſlow, is the progreſs of a ſinner towards righteouſneſs; it requires much time and many efforts to lay aſide his vices and to acquire the oppoſite virtues—he hath many things to learn and many to forget; he hath to repair perhaps much injury which he hath done, and to atone certainly for much bad example

which

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which he hath ſet; he hath not only to leave off ſin, and to practiſe virtue, but he hath alſo to learn to deteſt the former and to delight in the latter; he hath to acquire the habit of holineſs, without which no man can ſee the Lord.

I would not be underſtood to ſay that never any ſinner, who had only a ſhort time allowed him for repentance, met with mercy. The great ſearcher of hearts, who can alone judge of the ſincerity of his converſion, if he perceives that he is thoroughly and effectually touched, and that, if life were lent him, he would no more return to his wickedneſs, will probably condeſcend to accept his repentance, though he lived not to reform;—but with the dying perſon himſelf, and his ſurviving friends, great fears muſt ever remain.—Inſtances, I fear, are too numerous, of apparent penitents, returning from the confines of the grave, who, immediately on their recovery, have forgot all their pious vows and reſolutions, and whoſe laſt ſtate has been worſe than their firſt.

No

No one can ſay that ſuch might not have been the caſe with his deceaſed friend, if he had recovered, however penitent he may have ſeemed; and I am very ſure that no one in his own caſe ought to truſt to it. SERM. XXIV.

The time of health and ſtrength is the only proper time for the buſineſs of religion; it demands, and will employ, our moſt powerful exertions; and *then*, only, can we be ſure that our reformation is ſincere, after we have lived for ſome time a pious, a virtuous life, when the danger of ſpeedily dying is, or appears to be, remote from us. Our good reſolutions may be, otherwiſe, only the effects of ſickneſs and terror—tranſient as the morning clouds and early dew—which returning health and apparent ſecurity would ſoon render abortive.

I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe by calling your attention to the words of the text, and to the ſubſequent conduct of the perſon who uttered them.—"Go thy way for this time; "when I have a convenient ſeaſon I will

"call

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" call for thee." They were ſpoken by the Roman governor, Felix, on this occaſion:— St. Paul had been ſent a priſoner from Jeruſalem to Ceſarea, that he might plead his cauſe, and anſwer to the accuſations of the Jews, before Felix. Felix had already heard his defence; but after a few days, he had an inclination to hear again from him ſome account of Chriſtianity; he accordingly ſent for him to preach before himſelf and his wife Druſilla: the Scripture tells us the ſubjects on which he ſpoke, and its effects on his hearer.—" As Paul reaſoned of " righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment " to come, Felix trembled; and he ſaid " unto Paul, Go thy way for this time; " when I have a convenient ſeaſon I will " call for thee." Felix reſembled, I fear, too many of theſe days; he was convinced, by the preacher's reaſoning, and the whiſpers of his own conſcience, of the enormity and danger of ſin, and of the neceſſity of piety and virtue; he felt the folly and abſurdity of his former courſe of life, and formed

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ſome looſe, unſteady reſolutions of amend- SERM.
ing it:—but when?—not at that preſent XXIV.
time, the moſt proper of all others, when his underſtanding was convinced and his heart touched, and when it might have pleaſed God that, by his hearing the preacher farther, and by his own endeavours, he might have been thoroughly converted; —no! he was for putting off the evil hour, for ſuch it appeared to him, perſuaded as he was of the neceſſity that it muſt one day arrive, or himſelf everlaſtingly periſh. He refuſes to liſten to the ſalutary terrors that had begun to aſſail him, and diſmiſſes his inſtructor ſomewhat haſtily and abruptly, "Go thy way for this time; when I have "a convenient ſeaſon I will call for thee." Did this convenient ſeaſon ever arrive?—no!—he kept Paul confined two years, and during that time had him brought before him frequently; not that he might profit by his diſcourſes, not that he might be perfected in the reformation, which ſeemed to have been began by the remorſe which Paul had

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once excited in him; but, as the Scripture tells us, in hopes that he might have received money of his priſoner, to let him go free. And ſtill farther, when he was removed from his government, willing to ſhew the Jews a pleaſure, that is, deſirous to atone for the many acts of oppreſſion of which he had been guilty, and to prevent their complaints from purſuing him, which we find they afterwards did, he left Paul bound. You ſee that, during two whole years, this convenient ſeaſon of hearing Paul, as he ought to have been heard, never arrived: he ſent for him, it is true, often; but as it was only with the expectation he would offer money for his releaſe, he was likely to profit but little from his diſcourſe on any other ſubject; and that he did profit but little, is evident, from his leaving an innocent man ſtill a priſoner.

Happy would it have been for Felix, if he had ſuffered the preacher's reaſoning, and the voice of his own conſcience, to have that immediate effect, which they ought to have had!

had! they were ſo forcible, and came ſo home to him, that he could no otherwiſe elude and deſtroy their influence than by poſtponing the hour of reflection till a future time.—His delay was his ruin.—Let *us* take warning by it; and whenever either the preacher's admonitions, the advice of friends, the peruſal of good books, the whiſpers of our own hearts, or the ſuggeſtions of God's holy ſpirit, awaken in us a ſenſe of contrition and remorſe, and a reſolution of living virtuouſly in future; let us inſtantly attend to them, and begin directly to act in conſequence; let us not put off our reformation till *to-morrow*, but begin the bleſſed work to-day, whilſt it is called to-day, leſt we be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. SERM. XXIV.

FINIS.

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